



The Ghost of River Brook Middle School

River Brook Middle School was a normal middle school, except for one minor problem. It was haunted. Nobody knew why it was haunted, nobody knew when the hauntings began, but everyone in the town believed the school was haunted. Every substitute teacher was terrified to step foot in the building, every new student begged their parents to switch schools, and the principal had second thoughts about coming to work every single day.

Anne Parker was already not excited to start her first day of school. She recently moved from New York to the much smaller town of River Brook. It was a strange little town. Everyone believed ghosts were real. Personally, she did not believe in the paranormal; she thought it was extremely idiotic.

Anne drummed her fingers on the car window, humming a tune to her favourite song. She glanced at her reflection in the window, at her long brown-reddish hair and the yellow hairband that sat on it. With a disgusted face she saw her one strand of hair that always stood up straight no matter how much water she put on it. She madly tried to flatten it down, with no success.

“Stop being paranoid,” said her father, carefully navigating through the children crossing the road. “You look great.”

“Thanks,” replied Anne. “But this is a new school! I need to make an amazing first impression!” She adjusted her mood ring that sat on her middle finger. “I need to look more than great.”

At Anne’s old school she was bullied constantly, and it only got worse when her best friend was transferred to another school. Anne was determined not to mess up.

“We arrived, kiddo,” said her dad, turning around to face her. Anne grimaced as she looked out her car window to see they were sitting in a parking lot right beside a tall brick building, her new school. “You’re going to make an amazing first impression, believe me.”

Anne forced a small smile. “Well, I better not be late on my first day,” she said opening her car door a crack.

“Love you Anne. Have a great first day.”

Anne grabbed her blue backpack as all her keychains jiggled. “Love you too Dad,” she responded as she hopped out of the car. She watched miserably as her father drove away, leaving her standing alone in the parking lot.

Anne was horrified by her new school. First of all, it was half the size of her old school back in New York. Secondly, the red bricks were slowly falling off the building and the words River Brook Middle School looked like they were dangling from a very thin thread! She walked up the steep steps to the main entrance carefully. They creaked and groaned with every step she took. Anne pushed open the blue door slowly and felt a sudden rush of cold air. Goosebumps trickled up her arm. She started to regret wearing a tee-shirt.

Anne took a deep breath. She reached into her jeans pocket and pulled out a small piece of crumpled paper with a number on it. “I just need to find locker number thirteen,” she said to herself. She walked down the hallway, glancing at all the other students.

Suddenly Anne felt a tap on her shoulder. “Excuse me?” said a voice. Anne spun around to see a girl a little taller than herself with long curly blonde hair and fancy gold earrings.

“Oh... uh, hello,” Anne said in her quiet shy voice. Anne cringed at herself. Why did she have to be so shy?

“Uh, yeah, hi,” replied the girl. “You’re the new girl, right?”

“I-I am,” Anne said.

“Want me to help you with finding your locker?” she asked in a not-so-friendly tone. “My name’s Lisa.”

Anne glanced around to see everyone staring at Lisa, who was obviously a very popular girl. She was bullied by girls like this before. She could not let that happen again. “Um, thanks... I’m Anne.” Anne gave Lisa the little piece of paper with the number thirteen.

Lisa coughed in surprise, almost swallowing a piece of gum she was chewing. “Locker THIRTEEN!” she yelped, tossing the paper behind her like it was cursed.

“It’s j-just a number,” Anne said nervously.

“Just a number?” Lisa hissed. “JUST A NUMBER! Anne, that is like the unluckiest number ever!”

Anne blinked. “I don’t believe in stuff like that,” she said. “S-sorry.” Everyone around them gasped and started to whisper.

“What is wrong with you?” Lisa snarled. “This school is haunted you moron. You’re in denial AND you need to face the FACTS!” Lisa flipped her hair back and adjusted a couple of beaded friendship bracelets she was wearing.

The other kids stared at them, most of them giving Anne annoyed glances. Suddenly a boy stumbled out of the crowd and fell in between Lisa and Anne. He sat up and fixed his black nerdy glasses that had tape holding them together. “Um Lisa, do you mean denial or the Nile as in the river in Egypt-,” he mumbled, trying to be funny.

Lisa's eye twitched. "WHAT DO YOU THINK JAKE! WHAT DO YOU THINK?" Lisa grabbed the collar of Jake's green and blue button shirt. She lifted him off the ground slightly and narrowed her eyes at Anne. "Even this doofus believes in ghosts, and his IQ is like, a thousand."

"Um," Jake said, "technically IQ doesn't go that high."

Lisa rolled her eyes and dropped him with a thump. "My point is if you don't believe in ghosts, you don't fit in with this town anywhere," Lisa snarled. She walked over to Anne and put a hand on her shoulder. "If you don't believe in the paranormal, you're the weirdo of the weirdos in this town," Lisa whispered right into Anne's ear. Then she continued to walk past, as if nothing happened. Immediately everyone went back to doing their own thing, while whispering to each other about the weird new girl.

Anne let out a sigh. "There goes my chance of being popular. Stupid paranormal garbage!" She kicked a nearby trash can, then yelped because she stubbed her toe.

"I could help you find your locker," the nerdy boy said as he stood up. He flipped his black bangs out of his eyes and gave Anne a small kind smile.

Anne raised an eyebrow. Jake was obviously not a popular kid, and he obviously did not have many friends, but he seemed nice. Anne gave him a kind smile back. "Thanks! My uh, locker number is thirteen."

Jake nodded. "Yup, I heard. Lots of weird stuff happens around that locker." He started to walk down the long hallway and Anne followed him slowly.

"H-how would you know?" she asked him.

"Because I'm right beside your locker!" Jake said with a small sad laugh. "I'm locker number twelve."

“Oh-” Anne said. She gulped. Maybe Jake was just trying to scare her or maybe the whole school was pranking her! But the more she thought about that theory the more Anne realized it was stupid. Her hands started to get sweaty like they always did when she got anxious. Anne realized the hallway was getting narrower with each step they took and she saw less people the further they went down the hall.

“Not many people go to this section of the building,” Jake explained.

The more they walked Anne realized the walls of the school were not covered in photos or art projects like most schools. The walls were just bare and paint was peeling off slowly. The floor was not shiny and clean anymore; it was covered in dust. “Where are the classroom doors?” she wondered to herself. Suddenly a huge rat scurried past Anne’s blue and pink sneakers. “AAA!” she yelped, jumping out of the rat’s way.

“You’ll get used to the rodents,” Jake sighed, watching the rat.

“How many rats are in this building?” Anne asked, shivering from a sudden gust of cold wind.

“Dozens,” Jake answered with a shrug, “Just at this end though.”

“Wonderful,” Anne said sarcastically. She saw a wall at the end of the hallway, meaning it was a dead end. On the wall were two tall lockers side by side: one was locker thirteen and the other was locker twelve. “T-there’s only two lockers down here?” Anne asked.

“Yup. The school doesn’t want any kids down this end,” Jake sadly chuckled. “But thirteen and twelve won’t move. Last time they tried to move them horrible things happened.” He touched the tape that held his black glasses together. “I was there when it happened. That’s how my glasses broke.”

Anne had so many questions, but she was not sure she wanted to know the answers to any of them. Anne stopped beside her new locker and stared at it for a minute. "The code is 13-12-39," Jake said, leaning over Anne's shoulder.

Anne put her hands on the lock and put in the numbers, her heart beating fast. Suddenly the locker door flew open. Paper, pencils, and markers came flying down on her. "ARGH!" Anne shrieked as she fell on the ground in the pile of school supplies.

"Oh yeah," Jake said, "Before the, uh, incident, my friend had this locker. He didn't get to clean out his stuff before he was sent to the, um, hospital." Jake ran his fingers along the side of locker thirteen. "I miss him so much."

Anne stood up and wiped dust off her clothes. "Well, he was messy and unorganized," she grumbled.

Jake laughed but it ended up in a sad whimper. "He sure was...."

Anne picked up the pages of paper to see that they were not empty. They had notes, peculiar sketches, and patterns all in messy handwriting.

"He was always writing stuff down," Jake sighed "I kept telling him to get better handwriting, but he didn't! H-he said he heard voices and saw things nobody else could hear. We all thought he was just crazy but.... he wasn't after all," Jake shivered as if a memory came back to him that he did not want to remember.

Anne gulped. She started to question if the paranormal was real or not. She was also trying to imagine how she could possibly go to bed tonight without having nightmares. Anne put her bookbag in her locker with a thud and she tossed all of Jake's old friend's notes in her locker. "So, when does class start?" she asked.

“In exactly six minutes, six seconds, and six milli-seconds,” Jake said matter-of-factly, looking at his black watch.

“So... six-six-six?” Anne whimpered.

“Well, not anymore! Here let me show you where our class is,” Jake offered pointing down the hallway. “Normally classes have around twenty people,” Jake told Anne as they walked down the hallway. “But ours only has five.”

Anne blinked. Five was a very low number for a classroom. “Why?” she asked.

“As I said before, the school doesn’t want kids in this hallway,” Jake shrugged carelessly.

They suddenly arrived at an open door that led to a small class. The room had only five desks. Each desk was covered in pencil scribbles. The walls were bare except for a whiteboard in the front and windows in the back. Unfortunately, the windows were too dirty to see out of and most of them were cracked. A young woman sat in a big black chair. She had a green sweatshirt, long red hair, and had a habit of chewing on her nails.

“Welcome!” the woman said suddenly, standing up quickly. Her eyes darted across the room before she made eye-contact with Anne. “M-my name is Ms. Brown, but e-everyone calls me Ms. B.” Ms. Brown pointed at Anne, her hands shaking. “Y-you must be the new student, Anne Parker.”

Anne nodded shyly and she smiled. “It’s a really nice school. I’m happy to, um, be here,” Anne said, lying a little.

“Y-yeah. Right. Sure,” the teacher mumbled under her breath. She gestured to the desks that sat in an uneven row. “Pick a seat!”

Anne sighed and tossed her binder on a desk. Jake sat beside her, glancing at her worriedly. Anne noticed and avoided eye-contact, but it was hard because she could feel him staring at her. "I'm usually not good at telling other people's emotions," Jake observed. "But I can tell you look a little upset or scared. Am I close?"

Anne slumped in her chair. "No, I'm happy," she lied. Anne was terrified. This end of the school was disgusting and strange, the teacher looked paranoid, something mysterious happened to Jake's best friend, and she could not help but think about Lisa. She started to fidget with her mood ring, like she always did when she was scared. She glanced down at the ring, it was a bright dark green, which meant she was happy. "I mean, according to this ring," she added.

"Those colours are based off heat, not emotion," Jake pointed out.

Suddenly Lisa walked through the door. Anne coughed in surprise and Lisa glared at her. "She's in this class?" Anne whispered.

"Don't be upset," Jake whispered back. "I was friends with her in elementary school. She was really kind then."

"Has she been nice recently?" Anne asked.

Jake sighed. "Good point. After we got into middle school she changed."

Lisa plopped down on the other side of Anne. "I hear you dorks talking about me," she hissed, adjusting her earrings. Anne flinched and Lisa smirked at her.

Suddenly another girl walked through the door. She had tan skin, dark brown hair, a purple sweater, and friendship bracelets that matched Lisa's. Lisa gestured to the open seat beside her and the girl sat down at that seat without hesitation.

“That’s Charlotte, Lisa’s best friend and the second most popular kid in the school,” Jake whispered.

At that moment a boy walked through the door. He wore a black baggy tee shirt and his black hair in a mullet. His eyes scanned the room then fell on Lisa.

“That’s Will,” Jake told Anne with a slight eyeroll. “He has a massive crush on Lisa and he has a lot of connections.”

Will sat on the other side of Jake and frowned at the fact that he was far away from Lisa. He quickly pulled out a phone from his dark jeans pocket and started to scroll down it endlessly. Lisa was whispering to Charlotte and they broke into giggles every few seconds. Charlotte had genuine laughter, but Lisa’s laughter sounded a little fake.

Ms. Brown walked to the front of the classroom, waving awkwardly at her students. She gulped and took a sip of water from her blue water bottle that was covered in stickers of famous quotations. “N-now that we’re all here, I’d like to introduce our new s-student Anne Parker!”

“Welcome to your living nightmare,” Will said without looking up from his phone.

“MR. HART,” the teacher yelled, “THAT’S N-NO WAY TO WELCOME A NEW S-STUDENT!” Her voice lowered to a slight mumble, “But you are right.”

“I’m always right,” Will said casually, grinning at Lisa. Lisa rolled her eyes and looked away.

Suddenly the room got colder and goosebumps trickled up Anne’s arms again. The teacher froze in place, everyone sat still not saying a word, their eyes darted across the room as if expecting something. A red marker flew off Ms. Brown’s desk and stopped in front of the whiteboard. It sat in place as if someone was holding it. Anne made a whimper sound. Ghosts were real after all. The

cap on the marker flew off and landed right on Anne's hand. It made a thump as it landed on her ring. All Anne could hear was her own heart beating. The marker started to write something on the whiteboard. Anne looked away not wanting to know what it was writing. After what seemed like forever the marker dropped to the ground with a thud.

"Welcome Anne Parker to River Brook Middle," Lisa read out loud. These words covered the whiteboard in fancy cursive writing with Anne's name circled.

At the end of the school day Anne climbed into her father's car and slumped into the seat. Her dad glanced at her worriedly, with an eyebrow raised. "Honey? What's wrong? You're usually more talkative than this."

"G-ghosts are real Dad," Anne whimpered. "And they're in this school. This whole CRAZY TOWN IS HAUNTED!" Anne wiped tears from her eyes.

"I-I know honey," her dad said grimly. "I went to the same school when I was a kid, so did your grandfather and your great-grandfather. I didn't want to make you go to this school but... I got a job with a higher pay and I needed it."

Anne never knew her family came from River Brook, a small unknown boring town. She thought they came from New York like her. Her dad lied to her. There was silence for the rest of the drive home.

The next day Anne walked down to locker thirteen. She grimaced while looking at the floor, not bothering to look up at everyone staring at her. She did not even flinch when Lisa yelled out her name. She arrived at her locker and put the code in quickly, not noticing Jake as he walked towards her and waved.

"A-Anne?" Jake asked, putting his hand on her shoulder.

Anne flinched and pushed his hand off her shoulder. "Don't touch me," she growled under her breath.

"I-I'm sorry," Jake said surprised. "Are you alright? You look angry. Did I do something?"

Anne sighed and shook her head. "I'm just not in a good mood today, and I'm definitely not in the mood for more hauntings." She slammed her locker door closed with a bam.

Jake winced. "Don't worry. Usually, all the ghost does is turn the air cold, make you feel like somebody's watching you, or stomp around. Big things like yesterday only happen once a week!"

"Wonderful," Anne hissed. "I can't wait for next week."

"Plus, we're not spending much time in this end of the school today, so we should be fine!"

Jake pointed out, patting Anne on the shoulder.

Anne flinched but did not say anything. She gave him a fake smile but all that was on her mind was how her dad had lied to her.

In gym class Will, Lisa, Charlotte, Jake, and Anne had to play dodgeball. Of course, Anne and Jake were on one team, while the popular kids were on the other. Lisa threw a bright red dodgeball right at Anne, but she easily stepped aside. Anne turned around to collect the ball, but the same ball came flying towards her at full speed and hit her face hard. Anne yelped and stumbled back, tripped over her feet, and fell to the ground on her back. Jake sprinted over and offered her his hand.

"I don't need help getting up," Anne said, pushing his hand away from her. She carefully got up and narrowed her eyes at him. "Is this a joke? Why did you throw the ball at me!?" Suddenly, she noticed everyone in the gym was pale.

“T-the ghost did it!” Lisa mumbled. “I swear!”

Jake nodded.

“B-but things like this only happen once a week, right?” Anne said a little nervously.

“It always does,” Jake said with wide eyes. “But apparently not this time.”

In music class Anne was assigned to play the drums. She was doing well until the room began to grow cold. Everyone kept playing but Anne froze when she felt a hand on her shoulder, a cold lifeless hand. She turned around but nobody was behind her, her heart thumped. Suddenly her wooden drumsticks flew out of her hands and hit her right on the forehead “OW!” Anne screamed.

Everyone looked over at her with wide eyes, except for Lisa who was smirking. “Did the ghost make those drumsticks hit your head?” Jake asked walking over, a flute in his hands.

“Yeah, genius.” Charlotte growled.

On the drive home Anne held an icebag to her forehead. Those drumsticks really hurt!

“So, are you going to tell me what happened?” her dad asked worriedly.

Anne let out a sigh, she was still mad at her dad for lying to her. “The ghost hit me with drumsticks in music class,” she muttered.

There was an awkward silence. “Oh,” her dad said finally, tapping his fingers nervously on the steering wheel.

“The ghost hates me, Dad!” Anne cried, lowering her head. “The ghost really does hate me.”

The next day Anne felt a tap on her shoulder when she was opening her locker. She assumed it was Jake, so she turned around, only to see Will standing beside her. He waved awkwardly.

“Will?” Anne hesitated “W-what do you want?”

Will held up his phone to Anne’s face, she flinched and stepped back. “This phone number,” Will whispered waving the phone around so that Anne could not see anything, “is of this guy I know who claims to have a special kind of metal that keeps ghosts away.”

“W-what?” Anne mumbled in disbelief.

“The ghost hates you so I thought-,” Will started but got cut off by Anne.

“How do you even know this person?” Anne interrupted, pushing his phone away from her.

Will bit his lip. “Well, he’s a third cousin twice removed from my best friend’s, aunt’s great-uncle.”

“Yeah, no thanks.” Anne sighed. She turned around to walk to class but Will jogged beside her.

“I also know a guy who can-,” luckily Will stopped talking as soon as he saw Lisa. He quickly waved to her while Lisa rolled her eyes.

Anne turned around to head to class, but something caught her eye. She had never noticed it before, yet it was right across from her classroom. It was a door, a simple boring brown door with a round door handle. On the door handle sat a lock with different letters. Anne walked up to the door and put her hands on the lock.

“Anne!” yelled a voice from behind her.

Anne yelled and turned around to see Jake running towards her with wide eyes. "DO NOT OPEN THAT DOOR!" he panted. "M-my friend discovered the code, and after going in that door he was never the same again."

Anne raised an eyebrow. "Do you know what's inside?" she asked, knocking on the door lightly. The sound seemed to echo through the hallway.

"DON'T KNOCK ON THE DOOR!" he screamed, pulling Anne away with her arm.

Then a sound echoed through the hallway, and it was knocking. Somebody on the other side of the door was knocking back. Anne and Jake both froze, they glanced at each other with wide eyes. "S-somebody's on the o-other side," Jake stuttered.

"I-I realize that," Anne whimpered.

For a second they both looked at each other before sprinting into the classroom, nearly tripping over their feet. Anne plopped down at her desk and Jake missed his chair and tumbled clumsily onto the floor. He lay there for a moment, trying to catch his breath.

Lisa sat beside Anne and raised her eyebrow judgmentally. "What on earth are you two idiots doing?"

"N-nothing," Anne replied. The bell rang and Lisa suddenly looked worried. "What's wrong?" Anne asked.

Lisa stuck out her tongue. "None of your business," she replied while fidgeting with her friendship bracelets and glancing at the empty seat beside her. "It's just that Charlotte is never ever late."

"She could be sick, or have a doctor's appointment," Jake offered. "Or maybe she forgot to set her alarm."

The teacher clapped her hands to get everyone's attention. "Anne, Lisa, Jake, Will, I-I have something to tell all of you," Ms. Brown wiped her eyes with a blue handkerchief. "C-Charlotte Rightwing will n-not be joining us for the rest of the year."

Lisa looked a little surprised but then she narrowed her eyes and glanced down the hallway, as if she knew something nobody else knew.

"Um, there was an a-accident on the bus with the uh, g-ghost," Ms. Brown said. Lisa crossed her arms and frowned. "She-I will not say e-exactly what h-happened, but she's in the hospital now a-and I think it would be a good idea to make h-her a get well c-card."

Lisa glanced at the empty desk beside her. She rested her arm on it and wiped her eyes. She put her face on the desk to hide it, but Anne could easily tell she was crying. "That stupid ghost," Lisa muttered under her breath.

Suddenly the sound of fire alarms echoed throughout the school, making Ms. Brown jump. The lights flickered and the sound of footsteps even louder than the fire alarms echoed through the classroom. The lights flickered on and off very fast, making Anne cover her eyes. Anne and all her classmates stood up, ready to evacuate. Will was quickly texting someone on his phone, Lisa was desperately trying to wipe off the mascara dripping down her face, and Jake bit his nails nervously. At that very second Anne heard moaning, a deep loud moan. Nobody else reacted, only she could hear it. Anne covered her ears from all the noise.

"Why won't this just STOP!" Lisa cried, emphasizing the word stop. Suddenly the fire alarms went off and the lights stayed on, as if Lisa was in charge of the ghost.

"So, do we evacuate?" Jake asked.

"It was a false alarm, probably some ghost pulled it," Will said with a shrug.

Ms. Brown nodded. "The g-ghost has been acting strange lately... I wouldn't be surprised if another child gets i-injured."

Lisa snapped a pencil in half and threw one half at Anne. "It's all your FAULT!" Lisa threw the other half at Anne. "IF YOU NEVER CAME HERE, CHARLOTTE WOULD STILL BE OKAY!"

Ms. Brown put a hand on Lisa's shoulder. "I-I know it's unfair, b-but you can't blame other people."

Lisa pushed the teacher's hand off her shoulder. "It's true, and you know it," she hissed. "As soon as Anne came here the ghost has been acting different."

"You know...," Anne said, "You are right. It's all my fault. The ghost hates me. It hates me!" Anne sniffed and tried her best not to cry. "I'm tired of this stupid school! I'm tired of this awful town!" She stood up and glared at Lisa. "And with people like you here, the school just gets more terrible. Blame me all you want, but you're awful too!" With that Anne bolted out of the room before Ms. Brown could comfort her.

Anne ran along the hallway, wiping her eyes with her sleeve. She pushed the door open to the washroom and slammed it shut. Anne collapsed on the floor crying. It was all her fault. Ever since she arrived the ghost has started to act weirdly. Her dad should have never moved her.

"Hello?" suddenly said a kind caring voice in front of her.

Anne twitched and looked up to see a girl with long black hair wearing a light blue dress. Anne quickly dried her eyes and stood up. "I-I wasn't crying," she muttered.

"It's alright," the girl said smiling. "Why are you upset?" she asked, putting a hand on Anne's shoulder.

Anne sighed. "The ghost here, it has been acting all weird ever since I came. It's my fault a girl named Charlotte is in the hospital and... on top of that Lisa's being such a jerk!" Anne lowered her head sadly.

"Yes, Lisa is a terrible person. Do not trust her," the girl told Anne. "And also, do not trust Jake. That boy is up to something."

Anne's eyes widened. "H-how do you know that I'm sort of friends with Jake?" She backed away from the girl slowly.

"Gossip spreads around this school quite fast," the girl laughed. "My name is Sophia." Sophia held out her hand. "And I can help you meet trustworthy people and show you the... ropes."

Anne grinned and went to reach for Sophia's hand without hesitation, excited to have another friend. Suddenly the girl's bathroom door swung open with a startling slam. Anne twitched and Sophia narrowed her eyes.

"DO NOT SHAKE HER HAND!" Jake yelled, running into the bathroom panting. "NO MATTER WHAT SHE SAYS!"

Anne gave Jake a confused look. "Why are you in the girl's bathroom? Go away Jake."

"There's nobody in this entire school named Sophia," Jake replied.

Anne glanced at Sophia who looked frustrated. "B-but I'm talking to a Sophia right now. What is your problem, Jake?"

Jake's eye twitched and he threw his hands up in the air. "I'm trying to save your LIFE!"

Sophia pushed Anne aside and stepped in front of her. "Enough you two," she growled. "Jake mind your own business and go away." Suddenly, the lights in the bathroom flickered, the

sinks turned on and off randomly, and the toilets started to flush at the same time making a very loud unsettling sound.

Sophia spun around towards Anne. "SHAKE MY HAND!" she screamed. Her eyes turned a bright blood red.

Anne jumped back, startled at the sudden scream. Jake grabbed Anne's shoulder and pulled her away from Sophia. "Anne, we have to get out of here!" Jake growled.

"NO, DO NOT TRUST HIM," Sophia argued, stomping her foot causing the bathroom to shake. She reached forward and touched Anne's fingertips.

Anne froze. The hand was very cold and made her shiver. Anne met Sophia's angry eyes. "Y-you're the ghost, aren't you?"

Sophia reached forward more, touched Anne's mood ring, and tried to pry it off her hand. Anne yanked her hand away and turned to face Jake. "W-why is she so... young?"

Jake flinched and hesitated. "This is really not the best time to ask questions, Anne."

The ghost grabbed Anne's shoulder and pulled her back, making Anne yelp in surprise. "Trust me," the ghost whispered in her ear.

"I-I'm sorry," Anne replied, pulling away from Sophia's grip.

Jake grabbed Anne's hand and ran out of the bathroom. Anne followed stumbling. They zoomed across the hallway, getting strange glances from other students and glares from teachers. Finally, they both stopped beside the large gym doors that were painted with a mural of a beach. Jake leaned against the door, panting.

"Are you okay?" Anne asked worriedly.

"I'm fine," Jake grumbled. "Just out of shape."

Anne looked around the hallway, fidgeting with her ring. "W-will the ghost follow us?"

"Probably not," Jake said a little darkly "Barely anyone sees the ghost, and when they do it's usually for a split second. Then whoever sees the ghost usually goes... insane."

Anne's heart thumped as she too slumped against the gym doors. "What does it even want from me? Why am I so important?"

Jake shrugged. "Maybe the ghost just likes terrorizing innocent people."

Anne shook her head doubtfully. She glanced at her hand that still was shivering from the ghost's touch. "It... tried to grab my ring."

Jake frowned and glanced down at the small innocent looking mood ring on her middle finger. "Where'd you get it from?" he asked.

"I-I don't know. My dad gave it to me for my birthday." Anne said nervously.

"When you get home ask him," Jake demanded. "Maybe that ring is important."

The drive home from school seemed slower than usual. Anne kept glancing at her ring as she and her father sat in awkward silence. Her dad tapped his fingers on the steering wheel as they sat in surprisingly busy traffic for such a small town.

"Dad...", Anne finally managed to say. Her dad glanced at her reflection in the rear-view mirror. "My uh, mood ring... where did it come from?"

"Oh, I'm so glad you asked!" Anne's dad said a little excitedly. "That ring has been passed down in the family for generations!"

Anne glanced at the ring curiously. "Why do you ask?" her dad said.

Anne remembered the ghost trying to grab the ring. Why did that ghost seem to want it? Anne sat in silence for a minute wondering if she should tell the truth or not. Her dad raised an eyebrow. "I-I was just curious." Anne said a little too quickly.

"If something bothers you, you can tell me," her dad said kindly.

"Nothing is bothering me, Dad," Anne lied.

The next day at school Anne hurried down the hallway. She felt like someone was watching her, but when she turned around, nobody was there. Anne managed to make it to her locker, panting from walking too fast. Suddenly she felt a cold hand tap her shoulder. "THE GHOST!" Anne screamed stumbling forward awkwardly.

"Anne?" Jake asked, raising an eyebrow. "You look paranoid."

"JAKE!" Anne yelled. "YOU GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK!" She took in a deep breath. "Maybe I am a little paranoid."

Jake reached over to help Anne stand up. "I'll try not to scare you again," he promised.

Anne smiled but it quickly faded. "Jake... My ring, it's a family heirloom," she said holding her hand up.

"Oh, then... why would the ghost want it?" Jake asked.

Anne shrugged but quickly twitched from realization. "Because..." she whispered, "the ghost is related to me."

Jake coughed in surprise. "WHAT? THE GHOST IS RELATED TO-"

Anne quickly reached forward and covered his mouth. "Hey! Not so loud!" Anne yelled, after seeing weird glances from other students.

“Sorry, sorry.” Jake mumbled.

“Don’t people say that sometimes a ghost is here because there’s something they haven’t done or something they want?” Anne asked.

Jake nodded.

“So... maybe this ghost wants my ring?” Anne said a little confused.

“Makes sense,” Jake replied. “But why is that little ring so important?”

Anne frowned. “Maybe it’s worth a lot of money?”

Jake blinked. “And why would you want money if you’re a ghost?”

Anne sighed. “Good point.” The bell rang and Anne quickly grabbed her stuff. “Well, we better get to class.”

Jake seemed to hesitate but then he poked Anne’s shoulder. “Maybe... we could... skip class?” he asked in more of a question than a statement.

Anne seemed a little surprised, but honestly she didn’t want to go to class and see Lisa again. “Why?” Anne asked back.

Jake sighed. “Let’s face it, the ghost is getting out of hand. We need to stop it,” he gestured towards Anne’s ring, “And that tiny piece of jewelry might do it.”

Anne hesitated. She didn’t want to see the ghost again nor give it her ring. But Jake did have a point. The ghost was out of hand. It hurt Charlotte so who is next? “A-alright,” Anne stuttered nervously. She took a deep breath. “Let’s go find that ghost.” Anne paused. “Wait where is the ghost?”

Jake pointed to the mysterious eerie door that had a lock on it. “Many believe the ghost lives in that room.” Jake gestured for Anne to follow. Once both got to the door Jake pointed at the lock. “I would have entered the room sooner, but I don’t know the code for the lock.” Jake twisted the lock in his hands, squinting at it. “It’s all letters, and there’s four of them.”

Anne thought about it for a moment. “If I was a ghost, what would I use?” she questioned out loud. “Wait! If the ghost wants my ring so much maybe that’s it!”

Jake grinned and quickly used “ring” as the code. The lock opened, making the door slide open a bit. From what Anne could see the room was dark, and hums from computers filled the space. Jake pushed open the door more. It creaked in protest. Jake gestured for Anne to go in. She stepped in the room, immediately tripping over a broom.

“Anne! Are you all, right?” Jake whispered.

“I’m fine.” Anne mumbled slowly standing up. The room was dark, except for a slight glow from computers on the other side. The room was unnaturally cool and was littered with janitors’ supplies. Anne raised an eyebrow. “Why are there computers in here, and why are they on?”

Jake hurried over to them then let out a small gasp. “There are security cameras all over the school!” He squinted at the desk that held the computers. “And there’s buttons all over this desk!”

Anne hurried over. Giant buttons covered the desk, each one glowingly inviting you to press it. “I wonder what they do?” Anne muttered curiously.

“Probably something bad,” Jake said reassuringly.

Suddenly the door flung open, with an angry Lisa on the other end. She was sweating and panting, her right eye twitched. She glared directly at us. "What... are you two doing?" she hissed, kicking a broom on the floor violently.

"We- I- um, yeah...?" Anne mumbled nervously.

"We are here to stop the ghost!" Jake said proudly, putting a hand on Anne's shoulder.

There was a moment of silence. "WHAT!!!" Lisa yelled. "YOU CAN'T STOP THE GHOST!"

Jake rolled his eyes. "Please Lisa, you just like the drama." He pressed down on a big red button. "Sadly, this button doesn't make her go away," he whispered.

"The ghost," Lisa stopped and took a deep breath, "is my great-grandmother's sister."

There was a stunned silence. "Well, there goes the theory I'm related to the ghost," Anne muttered under her breath. She gestured at Lisa. "There's no way I'm related to her."

Lisa made a gagging sound. "Believe me I am not related to you," she hissed. "My great-great-aunt does want your ring though."

"You've been listening to our conversations!" Jake exclaimed, looking a little creeped out.

Anne stepped a little closer to Lisa. "And why would she want my ring?"

Lisa flinched. "Why do you think she looks so young? Do you really think she could have died naturally at that age?"

Anne shook her head as a no. "I-"

Lisa raised her hand to cut Anne off. "Your great-grandmother pushed her off a nearby bridge," Lisa suddenly said darkly.

Anne took a step back. "But-I-she did?" she stuttered.

"Of course, it was by accident, but your great-grandmother did push her, making her lose her balance," Lisa growled. "That ring fell off her hand before she hit the water. It belongs to my family!" Lisa screamed, her voice echoing in the small room.

Jake reached out to pat Lisa on the shoulder. Lisa flinched and stepped back. "Please, Lisa, calm down."

"I need your so-called family heirloom ring," Lisa hissed, ignoring Jake.

Anne took her ring off slowly and dropped it into Lisa's hand. Lisa's eyes widened a little and looked down at it like it was a diamond. "There, it's yours," Anne said.

"I- you really gave it me?" Lisa asked, bewildered.

"Of course, anything to put your great-great-aunt to rest," Anne replied.

"You're welcome," Jake muttered.

Lisa stared at them for a moment, a little confused. She turned it around carefully examining every corner. "You really gave it to me?" she muttered. "I thought I'd have to take it by force!"

Suddenly, as if summoned, Anne felt a cold lifeless hand on her shoulder. "Hello Anne," said an uncomfortably familiar voice.

Anne jumped back to see Sophia, grimacing and staring into Anne's eyes. "H-hi Sophia!" Anne stuttered.

"She gave me the ring," Lisa said holding it up like a trophy.

"She gave it to you?" Sophia hissed. "She wanted to give it to you?"

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"She gave it to you?" Sophia hissed. "She wanted to give it to you?"

Anne frowned. "Guys, you're making me sound like a jerk here." Sophia glared at Anne and Lisa raised an eyebrow. "Because I'm not. I'm willing to help." Anne elbowed Jake.

"Me too," he said.

"Your great-grandmother bullied me for most of my short life," Sophia said unemotionally. "Like you'd be any better."

"I-I never even met my great-grandmother," Anne replied. "And I'm not her." Anne was telling the truth. She had never met her great-grandmother, though her dad always told her stories about how kind she was, and how she always donated to charity. But now those stories seemed unbelievable.

Sophia's eyes glowed a dark blood red. She slowly started to grow taller until her head was almost to the ceiling. The room grew colder and colder till it felt almost unbearable.

Lisa's eyes widened and she shook her head rapidly. "No Aunt Sophia," she said, her voice shaking. "Please let's think about this!"

The ghost ignored her niece and reached towards Anne. Anne yelped and stumbled backwards, trying to avoid the hand. Jake picked up a broom and wacked the hand, but the broom just passed through it and made it ripple. Sophia picked Anne up by her shirt collar. Anne struggled and kicked but the ghost was too strong.

"You will pay for what you did," Sophia growled. "I could have had a long peaceful life but then you came along." Sophia threw Anne against the wall with a crash as she landed on the computers. "I knew you were going to show up one day or another. I was waiting." The ghost chuckled as Anne groaned and struggled to sit up in the heap of computers. "Those computers do hurt; I've been using them to watch kids. And those buttons? Each one connects to hidden fans in

the walls to blow cool air. It's hard to haunt an entire school without some mechanical help." The ghost grinned an unnaturally wide grin.

Jake rushed over to Anne, hopping over broken shards of glass.

"You're going too far," Lisa said nervously. "Just like you did with Charlotte."

"THIS GIRL RUNIED MY LIFE!" Sophia boomed, her voice echoing through the tiny room.

Jake offered Anne his hand and helped her get up slowly, as Anne winced in pain.

"Let me remind you," Lisa said slowly. "The girl who ruined your life is dead. This is her great-granddaughter." Lisa tossed the ring carelessly at Sophia. "Here's your ring. That's what you wanted."

Sophia caught the ring. "I like this ring." she said. "But I like the sound of revenge more."

Anne stumbled out of the heap of computers with Jake following her. "Wait!" she said.

Sophia raised an eyebrow. "What?" the ghost hissed.

"M-my dad, he always tells me stories about how great my great-grandmother was and that she always donated to so many charities." Anne coughed. "Maybe she did change and became a better person."

Sophia rolled her eyes. "Nice try, but I'm not falling for anymore lies."

"WAIT!" Lisa screamed.

"WHAT NOW!?" the ghost shouted back.

"W-was her great-grandmother's name Millie?" Lisa asked, staring at her phone.

The ghost gagged at the mention of the name. "Yes, and why do you ask?"

Lisa's hands shook as she read whatever was on her phone. "S-she was the one who donated money for your grave, so you could have a proper burial."

Sophia froze. "That's how my parents could afford a funeral. She donated the money." The ghost shrank back to normal size. "I always wondered how that happened since they were poor."

"When she was older, she donated money to orphanages, shelters, and many other charities," Lisa read. "She also said that she regretted the accident. She never intended for Sophia to fall in the lake and felt miserable for many years."

Anne and Jake glanced at each other. "I apologize for what my great-grandmother did," Anne said, elbowing Jake in the ribs.

"OW!" Jake yelled. "I mean I apologize on behalf of all the other kids who mistreated you." Jake forced a smile even though there were shards of glass digging into his foot.

Suddenly, as if Sophia was made simply of thin air, she disappeared. Lisa bent over and picked up the ring that lay on the floor. "Aunt Sophia must have went to the afterlife, after all these years."

Anne smiled but Lisa lowered her head. "I-I'm sorry, for being mean. I knew who you were when I first saw you and I thought that...."

Anne patted Lisa's shoulder. "It's alright, really."

Suddenly the door opened, and everyone turned to see the principal standing there. He stared at the broken computers in horror, then saw Anne and Jake who had scratches and were bleeding slightly. "What the heck happened here?" he asked with shock.

“Great news! You’re de-ghosted!” Anne said happily.