

Chapter One

The Mitchells arrive

I didn't like them from the first moment they came into the house. The girl was bad enough but the boy was a horrible kid; noisy, spoilt and so annoying that I couldn't get any peace. I went all creepy and tingly from the racket he made, with all that screaming and yelling. But I thought I'd wait a few weeks before I did anything about it - that way I could be certain they really were as bad as I thought. Once I'd know for sure, I could start to scare them a bit and maybe they'd decide to go, like the others before them.

You see, it's not always as simple as people think, when they talk about ghosts. We aren't as tough as you might think, you know. As a matter of fact, I can't go anywhere near an electric wire, especially if there is something switched on at the other end of it. I don't know why but I think it's to do with the magnetic force: it makes me feel really weird and then I'll wake up somewhere hours later, not knowing how I got there and feeling kind of zapped.

I lived in a big house - old and grey mostly. The walls were grey on the outside and the wood frames of the windows and doors were stained with old grey cobweb marks. Even the spiders had given up here, though I'm not saying I was annoyed about that. Ghosts like me can hear things that other people can't and I always hated to hear the screaming and yelling of a fly as it was being torn apart by some great hairy spider. I'd walk about with my hands over my ears, trying not to hear it - but still I would. That and the sound of its legs being chewed, ugh!

The windows got boarded up soon after the last people left, about five years ago, and I had to stay in the dark after that. They went because I scared them away; well, that's what they said, though I never actually did them any harm. In fact, I quite liked them.

The old man was called Arthur Miller and he looked after the whole place really well, even though he was a bit dodderly. I used to watch him from my space in the attic and he'd spend hours walking and poking around in the garden, growing his vegetables and tidying things up. He loved to work and hardly ever sat still but perhaps that was so he could keep out of *her* way.

She was called Gwendolen. I always thought it was a stupid name and she was stupid too. She was always telling the poor old man off, even when he tried his best to look after her. That's why I let her see me a few times but then she got the idea I was some sort of dangerous monster and made Arthur take her away to live somewhere else. That's why I decided to be a bit more careful now with these new kids. You never know when haunting someone could have the wrong effect. Not everyone likes having ghosts around them, though I suppose you don't mind, or you wouldn't want me telling you this story.

Anyway, I'll tell you more about the old couple later on. Let me get back to what I started to say before. The girl was called Amy and her brother was Jonathan. She was about ten when they moved in and he was six. She was small, had big teeth that seemed to shine a lot when she smiled and liked to play music on different instruments. I used to enjoy listening to her, especially when she played the recorder: it made me remember when I was a girl and I sat and played Greensleeves as well. I think most people play that when they learn the recorder, don't they?

But while she was playing, Jonathan would be kicking a football around in the garden, making enough noise for a whole playground. Why do boys make so much racket? No girl on her own would ever go charging around like that, breaking things and annoying everyone. I was always very careful not to irritate people when I was alive. Mind you, that was ages ago. Perhaps they bring children up differently now.

The house soon started to look nicer after they came, I'll admit that. Amy's mum and dad began cleaning, painting and wallpapering almost as soon as they arrived. The bedroom at the back which looks out across the playing field was the first one they decorated and even at the start, when they wiped the dust off the window inside, I knew it would make things better. Luckily I could keep out of the way in the attic for most of the time and I just let them get on with it. I knew it would depend on whether I could get to like them as to whether I'd start to haunt them properly but for the time being they were making my house much nicer to live in and if it was only a matter of putting up with horrible little Jonathan, then I'd do my best to get on with it.

Not long after they came, Amy fell and cut her leg on the back doorstep on the rusty old boot scraper which Arthur had once bought. Then she sort of fell over and lay there clutching at herself, with no thought about getting help. I think she must have passed out, because she was normally pretty sensible when strange things like that happened. I could see blood coming out of the cut and I didn't know how to tell anyone about it, because Amy's mum was upstairs doing her ironing, Jonathan was in the playground and their dad was out at work. So I picked up a plate from the sideboard in the kitchen and threw it as hard as I could (which wasn't very hard) across the room. I felt terrible but it was the only way I could think to get poor Amy's mum to come and look after her. People think that ghosts enjoy throwing things about the place and making all sorts of mess and noise, but actually I hate it - I'd far rather have the place tidy. Not only that but actually it's very hard and it takes all my strength to throw something, even if it's quite light.

When Amy's mum heard the plate, she ran down to investigate and saw her little girl on the doorstep, half in a faint. She gave a shriek, quickly called Jonathan in from the swings, and loaded them all into her car. They were gone a long time and then

eventually, when they came home, Amy's leg was all cased in plaster, so it must have been pretty serious after all. Later that night I heard Mrs Mitchell (that was the family's name) talking to her husband in the living room.

"I don't understand it though, darling. Why did the plate smash? Amy couldn't have done it and Jonathan swears he didn't, though it would be pretty typical if he had done. It all seems rather odd, don't you think?"

Her husband stayed quiet for a bit and then I heard his reply, which made me feel a lot better.

"I don't know either, love. But I dare say it wasn't anything very much. They say that sometimes young children can move things around by the force of their minds: psychokinesis, I think it's called. Perhaps it was that and Amy just sort of did it herself, without realising what was happening. It's the only thing I can think of."

They went on a bit more but I went back to my attic, very glad that they seemed so happy with their own silly explanation. If they had known it was me who had thrown the plate, they'd have been a lot less happy and I was glad to think that they weren't worrying about ghosts yet.

I'd been in the house for a long time and I didn't want them to try to get rid of me.