

# Chapter One

## The Games



Eerie organ music sounded as the vampire skidded around the corner, a giant mummy lumbering after him. The vampire glanced over his shoulder briefly and bared his fangs at his bandaged pursuer, but nonetheless he picked up the pace.



A gangly banshee appeared behind the mummy, her wild, knotted hair flapping as she ran. "YOU CAN'T STOP ME!" she screeched, momentarily blocking out the mysterious chords with her piercing voice.

After the banshee came a skeleton, closely followed by a zombie, lurching slowly but steadily at the back of the pack. The creepy music grew louder ... and louder ...

...and then stopped.

Everyone dived for the chair nearest to them. The mummy and the banshee grabbed the first two, while the skeleton and the vampire were forced to race around the perimeter an extra time before they could sit down.

Finally, the zombie staggered to a halt.

"You're out, Turf!" called Luke Watson, pulling one of the chairs away to the side of the room. "OK, Mr Spectre – more music, please!"

Giving him the thumbs-up, the ghost of Fool Spectre turned back to the translucent church organ and continued to play. Turf the zombie limped off to the food table, hoping he hadn't missed the deep-fried spleens. He hadn't.

"Great party!" said Cleo Farr.





“Your dad certainly seems to be enjoying himself,” grinned Luke, indicating the huge mummy, racing around the small circle of chairs once again.

“He’s just pleased you’ve decided to stay in Scream Street,” said Cleo, squeezing Luke’s arm. “We all are.”

Luke smiled at her, then turned at the sound of laughter on the other side of the room. His mum was trying on the cape that belonged to their vampire neighbour, Bella Negative, and sticking out her teeth like fangs.

The beautiful witch standing with them, Eefa Everwell, raised a perfectly manicured finger, purple sparks fizzing around the long, elegant nail. “I could give you some real fangs if you like?”

Mrs Watson held up her hands in mock terror. “It’s enough excitement just living next door to vampires, thank you very much!”

Steven Black watched this nightmare through the crack between the doors of the cupboard in which he was hiding. There were monsters out there – and they were playing party games!

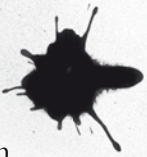

Since he had stepped through the doorway into Scream Street earlier that day, he’d wandered





around the strange neighbourhood, exploring. The houses were weird – all tall and twisted, with black slate roofs and wooden window shutters. It was like being on the film set for a spooky, old-fashioned horror movie.





Curious to see inside one of the houses, Steven had climbed in through an open window, hiding in a cupboard when he had heard people coming.

He must have fallen asleep, because when he had woken up, he was still in the cupboard, his back stiff. He had been about to open the door and climb out, when the organ music had started...

“Who’d have thought it?” said a voice.

Luke jumped. His friend Resus Negative had crept up behind him. “Don’t do that!”

Resus grinned. “I mean it, though – who would have thought we’d see your mum and dad hanging out with everyone like this?”


The music came to a sudden stop and Dr Skully, Scream Street’s skeletal teacher, found himself without a chair. “Sorry,” called Luke as he slid another seat away and signalled for Fool to carry on playing.

“Speaking of which,” said Resus, scanning the room, “where *is* your dad?”

“In the garden,” replied Luke. “Playing pin the tail on the dragon.”

“This I *have* to see!” grinned the young vampire. “You coming?”






“After this game’s finished,” said Luke. “And after I’ve found something to drink; I had one of Cleo’s lotus-flower fritters earlier and I’m dying of thirst.”

“There’s nothing wrong with my fritters!” cried Cleo. “But I have got some lemonade if you fancy it.”

“Thanks!” Luke took the bottle from her and pulled hard at the cork. He grunted in frustration when it wouldn’t budge.

“Give it here,” said Resus, snatching it from his friend. The vampire sank one of his glistening fangs into the top.



Luke grinned. “Watch out, bottle – he’s going to bite your neck!”

“Ha ha,” retorted Resus, twisting round in an effort to dislodge the cork. Drool began to drip from his fangs and run down the sides of the bottle.

“Eugh!” exclaimed Cleo. “I’m not drinking that.” She pulled her bandages up to cover her mouth in disgust.

The room fell silent as Fool Spectre stopped playing once again. Cleo’s dad slumped into a chair next to the banshee.

“Mr Negative is out!” announced Luke. As the music started up for the last time, the two finalists circled the remaining seat.

A wet *pop!* signalled that the lemonade was open. Luke grabbed a glass and turned back to Resus. “Fill me up...” he began, then bit his lip to stop himself laughing. The cork was still firmly wedged in the neck of the bottle: it was Resus’s false fangs that had squelched free.

“Don’t shay a shingle word,” slobbered Resus, grasping them like a corkscrew and finally uncorking the bottle. Born a normal child to vampire parents, he wore the fake fangs and dyed his hair jet black to avoid looking out of place among his family.

“My lips are sealed,” grinned Luke as Resus filled his glass. “In fact, if you stick a cork on the other tooth as well, you’ve got yourself a set of safety fangs. You’ll never bite your tongue again!”

With a final dramatic chord, Fool Spectre’s organ recital came to an end and the mummy squeezed his giant frame into the single chair.

“Mr Farr is the winner!” Luke announced to much applause.





“CONGRATULATIONS!” bellowed the banshee.

Luke’s dad appeared in the doorway. “Now we’ve finished musical chairs,” he said, “I’ve got an idea for a new game – musical scares!”

The other residents gathered around him to hear the rules.

“As Scream Street’s honorary normals,” began Mr Watson, “it took Susan and me a long time to get used to some of you.”

“You can say that again,” grinned Alston Negative. “I lost count of the number of times you fainted when you saw me!” A ripple of laughter spread across the room and Luke’s mum joined her husband.

“OK, OK,” said Mr Watson, smiling. “So, let’s test how our nerves are holding up. I want each of you in turn to do your best to scare us! Fool – if you’d be so kind as to set the scene...”

The party guests began to chatter excitedly as Fool Spectre shimmered into view at his organ to play another dirge.

Turf the zombie lurched towards Mr and Mrs Watson, his arms stretched out before him. “Brains! Brains!”





Luke's dad shook his head. "You'll have to do better than that, Turf!"

Mrs Watson laughed. "Who's next?"

Eefa Everwell stepped up to try out a little magic on them.

Resus turned to Luke. "You could win this easily!"

"How?"

"Duh!" said Resus, tapping Luke on the head. "You're a werewolf, remember."

"I don't think that's a good idea," said Cleo.

"Cleo's right," agreed Luke. "It was my wolf that brought my mum and dad here in the first place. They were terrified every time I transformed."

Resus rolled his eyes. "And the point of the game is...?"

Luke still wasn't convinced. "If I transform in a room full of people, I could really hurt someone," he said.

"OK," said Resus. "Just change your head or something. I thought you were able to control which part of your body transforms."

"I am," Luke replied defensively.

"Well, now's your chance to prove it! Unless



you're too afraid to accept the challenge, of course..."

"Too afraid?" scoffed Luke. "No chance! I'm just waiting for you to stump up something worth betting for."

"Don't you worry about that," Resus replied. "If you win, you can have my entire collection of medieval weapons. But if I win..." He reached inside his cloak and pulled out a small golden casket decorated with hieroglyphics.

Luke opened the box to reveal a vial of witch's blood, a werewolf's claw, a skull, a vampire's fang, a mummy's heart and a diseased zombie's tongue. "You want to try to win the relics from me?" he asked.

"Not all of them," said his friend. "Just the vampire's fang. Count Negatov was my ancestor, after all."

"I don't know..." began Luke. He had gone through a lot to find the founding fathers' gifts, and the thought of giving them up felt strange.

"Oh, come on," encouraged Resus. "It's not like you need them now you've decided to stay on in Scream Street. I thought they'd make cool





souvenirs to remind us of everything we went through to get them.”

“I like the sound of that,” said Cleo. “There are just enough for two each. I’d like to have the mummy’s heart and the skull – if that’s OK?”

“Go on, then,” agreed Luke, shaking off the strange feeling. “I’d never have found them if it wasn’t for you guys, and I’m glad they’re going to good homes.”

“In that case,” said Resus, peering into the casket, “I’ll have the bottle of witch’s blood to go with my vampire fang ...”

“...leaving me with the zombie’s tongue and the werewolf’s claw,” finished Luke. “That was easy enough!”

On the other side of the room, Resus’s dad was downing a pint of blood to try to spook Luke’s parents.

Mrs Watson shook her head. “Like plasma off a bat’s back, Alston!”

Resus nudged Luke. “But don’t think it gets you out of transforming that ugly mug of yours,” he said. “You’ve still got to try to scare your mum and dad and win my weapons – if that’s OK with Little Miss Sensible, of course...”



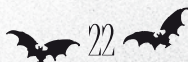
“Oh, why not?” said Cleo with a laugh. “I don’t suppose it’ll hurt if you only do it for a minute or two.”

Luke closed his eyes and focused. When he had first started transforming, it had happened when he’d been really angry. All that stuff about werewolves only appearing when there was a full moon was just in the movies; the change was actually triggered when the rage inside could no longer be contained and burst out in animal form.

Over time, Luke had found that he could set off his transformations simply by thinking about something that made him angry – and, even better, he could focus that fury and push it towards particular areas of his body.

This was what he would do now, even if it was merely a party trick this time. He thought back to the moment when hordes of the faceless men known as Movers had invaded his home and brought him and his family to Scream Street. Even though he was now happy here, the fact that he and his parents had had no choice in the matter still made him furious.

The anger bubbled inside him like a witch’s





steaming cauldron, and Luke concentrated on channelling it to change the shape of his face. His nose stretched out to form a snout, complete with long whiskers. Jagged teeth burst from his gums and his tongue grew thicker and wider. Lastly, rough fur sprouted across his face, and his ears rose up to sit high on the top of his head.

The transformation complete, Luke leapt in front of his parents, threw back his head and howled. Before either of them could react, a scream rang out from behind them – the scream of a child.

“STAY AWAY FROM ME!”

