



CHAPTER 1

The Big Return

Largo Bay was a fun beach city. People came from all over to enjoy the sun and sand. Through the years the city had grown. Weird things were known to happen there. The oddest things usually happened at night.

It was three in the morning. There was nobody on the beach. Well, nobody living ...

First a blue-green light appeared. It shone far out over the ocean. Three ghosts came out of the light. They floated over the water.

These weren't just any ghosts. One was Palmer Goatsick. Another was Libby Tildren. The third was Mayor Maxwell Davis. They had been alive once. As living people, they had built Largo Bay.

The city had grown. Modernized. The sandy beaches were still there. But there were many more homes and tall buildings. Gone were the open spaces. The place was no longer small. It had lost its rustic vibe.

The three ghosts flew over the city.

“Why ... why ... those buildings are bad!” Palmer cried.

He had been the city’s richest man. Palmer was a city founder. The place was named after his grandfather. Largo Goatsick had settled there in 1875.

Palmer had been rich. *Really* rich. He wore the best clothes. The man had been a friend of Karl Benz. Benz had built a car. It had used a gasoline engine. For a long time, Palmer had the only car in town.

The ghost wore his black hair slicked back. He still looked cool, for a dead guy.

“I would never have loaned money for this!” cried Libby.

She also came from money. Her family had owned much of the city. They had built a bank. It was called Tildren National. The bank loaned money. Its money built shops and homes.

Libby was tall. She always wore long dresses. Her blonde hair flowed down her back. She loved it long. Short hair was not for her.

“Where’s my house?” the mayor yelled.

They flew over homes and shops. The ghosts had viewed the entire city.

At first they were just curious. Now they were upset. Palmer, Libby, and the mayor had not expected the change. They didn’t know their beloved town had grown.

“There’s your home!” Libby cried. “It was moved.”

“Moved?” yelled the mayor. “Let me see! Who are they to move my house?” His fat face turned red. The man was angry. His thinning hair stuck straight up.

Wetlands were near the beach. That was where the large two-story home had been. The white home stood apart from the city. That was the way the family wanted it.

Now it had moved. It was next to city hall. City hall was in the middle of the action.

“Well,” Palmer said. “At least it’s still standing. There’s nothing left of the place I remember.”

“Indeed,” sniffed Libby. “This place is terrible. Large buildings. Small houses. Too many people. My family worked hard. They wouldn’t want to see our town look like this.”

“You’re right,” the mayor said. “This is a disaster.”

“We can’t let it stand,” Palmer said.

“And we won’t,” the mayor cried. “We’re going to bring it back. Our people will return. We’ll make this town shine once again.”

With that, the mayor flew away. Libby and Palmer followed.

The three flew into the blue-green light. In a flash, the light was gone. And so were the ghosts of Largo Bay.



“Huh? Lightning?” Abby McQuade said out loud. She stared out her window. The light in her room flickered.

She had seen the blue-green flash. Abby hadn’t seen the ghosts, though.

Abby returned to her big bed. She wore her favorite pajamas. Pink shorts. White T-shirt. Her long red hair was in a ponytail. Abby squirmed. She wanted to get comfortable.

She read on her tablet. It was a book by Agatha Christie. The book was called *Murder on the Orient Express*. Her English report was due soon. Abby wasn’t behind on her reading. She loved to read. In fact, she couldn’t put down this book. Abby had many interests. She could read about almost anything.

Her parents were asleep. The master bedroom was down the hall. The house was perfect for the family. Cozy. It was a one-story home. A few years ago, the McQuades had painted it bright yellow. It was nice to be different.

From her bed Abby stared out the window. What about that weird blue-green light? She had expected to see more. But it probably wasn't lightning.

She turned back to her tablet. Her covers felt soft and warm. Then the battery died.

“No!” she cried. “That’s lame.”

Ugh. She had forgotten to charge it. Who had time for that? She got out of bed again.

Her bedroom was simple. It worked for her. Less distractions. There was her large bed. The closet was full of clothes. She had a desk too. Like most kids, she also had a TV. It could stream shows. On the walls were photos of her friends.

Abby dreamed of being Katniss Everdeen. Recently, she'd taken up archery. Her bow and arrows rested in a corner of the room. A park was nearby. She practiced shooting there.

Now the tablet was plugged in. She climbed back into bed. But she couldn't sleep.

Should she read another book? There was a stack near her bed. It felt good to hold a book in her hands. Flicking a screen was cool. But turning pages felt real. Studying the words. Feeling the paper with her fingers.

She had been enjoying the mystery book. Abby didn't want to read something else. What about a movie? At 3:30 a.m.?

Abby turned off the lights. She had to be up for school. It was just hours away.



CHAPTER 2

Blackout

School had gotten out 30 minutes before. Abby was sitting in Giardini's Pizza. It was in Largo Bay Center. There were just a few customers. The place was small. There were only four tables to eat at. In the back was a small kitchen.

Abby was getting a snack. She was with Will Chu. Clara Erickson was there too. They had each ordered small pizzas. It would take 10 minutes.

Clara was Abby's best friend. They had known each other since kindergarten. The two girls dressed alike. They mostly wore jeans and T-shirts. It didn't get too hot near

the beach. But sometimes the girls wore shorts when it did. They liked their look.

Clara had long brown hair. It was super curly. She was a swimmer—a really good swimmer. Clara was in the sun a lot. Her skin was like honey. Every weekend she had swim meets. Clara liked to win. She hoped to be in the Olympics. Unlike Abby, she lived by the calendar.

Will was into gadgets and computers. He also played guitar. Of course he was in a band. His was called the Psychotic Nebulae. It was a punk rock band.

Will wanted to be a scientist. His grandpa had died of cancer. He hoped to find a cure. Abby knew he would one day. Will was a genius.

The kids were in eighth grade. They went to Largo Bay Middle School. It was close to the shopping center. The mall had

restaurants, shops, a supermarket, and a dry cleaner. There was also a game store. It was called Largo Bytes. It sold old video games and comic books.

“The historical center was cool,” Will said. “You know what? The mayor’s house was moved only a few years ago. It was a big effort.”

Last weekend Will had gone to the historical center. It told the city’s history. The center showed old pictures and other items. It was next to city hall.

“That’s what you did last weekend?” Abby smiled. “That’s geeky, Will.”

“I think it’s cool,” Clara said. “Everyone should learn about where they live.”

“Thanks.” Will smiled.

Abby thought Will *liked* Clara. She knew Clara was crushing on Will. The girl had been since third grade. The two never did anything about it. It made Abby roll her eyes.