

Creepy Cursmeyer

and the Ghosts of Wallace Towers



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Chapter 1

The Wallace Mortuary and Funeral Parlor

Henry Wallace had a talent in working with the dead.

He was the youngest of nine children and grew up as his family passed away. Three of his brothers died in serving their country. An uncle and a sister perished in a train crash. Two sisters and a brother died from random, senseless violent acts. Five others, including his mother and father, died from illnesses. Henry became the last surviving Wallace before the age of twenty-five when his brother, Patrick, died in 1918 in the First World War.

Henry Wallace had no interest in becoming a businessman, but the persistent presence of death made the opening of a mortuary and funeral parlor an easy and logical decision. He quickly discovered that his experiences in witnessing the deaths of his family members throughout his life contributed to his skills in managing a funeral

parlor and his artistry in the configuration of lifeless limbs and inert bodies.

Henry remembered his sister, Claire, as he applied makeup to the blue, cold skin of his current client, Wendy Martin. Henry never forgot how peaceful Claire looked at her wake. Like his sister, Wendy was only fifteen and the victim of dysentery.

The appearance of unblemished skin on a young, deceased person was easier to manage than an elderly, deceased person, but the pressure from knowing parents will make their final goodbyes to their child made Henry work twice as hard at making everything perfect. Wendy's skin quickly was as healthy looking as when she was alive. She looked similar to Henry's sister: brown, wavy hair, a white dress, white skin with the faintest tint of blue.

Wendy's wake would begin in approximately two hours, but Henry still had an extensive checklist to complete. He finished with the body, took off his apron and gloves, and went through the checklist item by item. He first neatly put chairs in rows for the ceremony. He setup beautifully blooming plants and flowers to

surround Wendy's casket. He placed a pen and guestbook at the entrance. Lastly, he pushed a podium in place for the preacher to do his eulogy.

The hall where Wendy Martin would have her funeral was ready with more than forty-five minutes before people would begin to arrive. Henry only had one more item on his list, checking in on the food.

Henry opened the kitchen door and said, "Will everything be ready?"

Henry's wife, Sheryl Wallace, yelled back in a thick Irish accent, "Pay you no mind!"

"I will be in the back," Henry said. "If anything happens, get me right away." Henry closed the door and quickly fled from the kitchen.

Henry knew better than to go into the kitchen while Sheryl was cooking. He retreated out the back door to the alley where there was an old, wooden chair underneath an awning. He sat down with a big sigh in the shade of the awning that protected his white skin from the sun. He anticipated everything being perfect, so he prepared himself to remain there for about two and a half hours. It would be a lot of time to think

about life and death, but Henry did not ponder large, philosophical questions. He didn't read a newspaper or magazine. He didn't even think about the funeral proceedings about to get underway. He just sat, motionless without thought.

Henry could have run his entire funeral business flawlessly except for one important thing. Henry did not have any talent in consoling the loved ones of the departed. His constant dealings with death, even before he opened his business, had desensitized him. He simply viewed death as the result of living life. There were a few occasions when he felt a death was truly tragic, like Wendy's death or Claire's death. Remaining silent in the back of the room during even these tragic funerals wasn't an option. His white complexion, bad teeth, and skinny, bony body made any physical comfort impossible. His mere presence only amplified the feeling of death in the room.

Sheryl never told Henry that one of his hugs felt like being stuck in a prickly, leafless tree in the dead of winter. They instead reached an unspoken agreement. Henry would set everything up while Sheryl cooked. Once people would arrive for the

funeral, Henry would disappear and Sheryl would provide comfort to sorrowful mourners.

A descendant of Irish tradition, Sheryl's bright red hair and lightly freckled face attracted many to the comfort of her arms. Her lengths spent in the kitchen, cooking the meals for reception after reception, could never be washed out from her skin. Each embrace provided a mourning family member with the sweet smell of past meals cooked.

Sheryl and Henry's love for one another grew far beyond any physical, mental, or spiritual connection between them. After twenty-six years of marriage, their love had a firm foundation of survival. Each provided an essential component for the other's continuing existence. Without Sheryl, Henry would have joined his family in their most common trait of dying painfully before the age of thirty-seven (his mother was the only one to have approached such a ripe, old age, dying from tuberculosis two months before she would have turned thirty-eight). Sheryl assumed, if not for Henry, she would have continued to work on her father's pig farm, waist deep in the excrement of hogs and slop. Both Henry and Sheryl felt

blessed for the Wallace Mortuary and Funeral Parlor.

Henry jumped when the back door swung open. Sheryl poked her head out and said with an Irish authority, “Mrs. Glenn is at the front with Charlie. Something about a black eye.”

“The family will arrive at any time,” Henry said nervously.

Sheryl replied, “I have a roast in the oven and pastries to fold! I have enough items on my hands.”

Henry stood up from his chair. Sheryl headed back to the kitchen as Henry went to the front door and reception area. He only had ten minutes before Wendy’s family would arrive.

The Wallace’s received few complaints from their patrons. The deceased were easy to please. The only trouble Henry ever had with a departed person was Mr. Humphrey. He requested to be buried in the sailor’s uniform he had not worn in twenty-seven years. Henry found it nearly impossible to put the small uniform on Mr. Humphrey’s now hefty, lifeless body. Likewise, the family of a departed person was usually easy to

please. Mrs. McGee wished for her funeral to be pink with a raspberry tart reception, much to the dislike of her children. Mrs. McGee's sons and daughters however knew of her fondness of pink flowers and raspberry tarts. Even though the funeral was short and no one ate any food, they did not complain.

The great majority of complaints for the Wallace Mortuary and Funeral Parlor didn't come from any customer or family member of a deceased person. They came from Henry and Sheryl's son, Charles Wallace.

Henry had reached the reception area at the front of the funeral parlor where Mrs. Glenn, Charlie's teacher, held Charlie by the ear. Even though Charlie was six feet tall, his head was tilted upward from Mrs. Glenn pulling on it. His skin was as white as his father, making the black eye easily visible from across the room.

Henry said cautiously, "What can I do for you Mrs. Glenn?"

Mrs. Glenn began to deliver her already prepared rant, "I won't tolerate this type of behavior any more, Mr. Wallace. This behavior must stop immediately or I promise you, this

behavior will be the reason your son will no longer be welcome at school.”

“Yes, ma’am,” replied Henry and Charlie at the same time.

“What did you do this time Charlie?” asked Henry.

Before Charlie had a chance to speak, Mrs. Glenn continued, “He was caught again fighting with another young man on the school steps. Fighting! Again! On the school steps!”

Charlie made an attempt to justify his actions and said, “He started it!”

“That’s enough Charlie,” said Henry quickly. “You know where to go. I will be there soon.”

Charlie began to walk forward. Mrs. Glenn however did not let go of Charlie’s ear. After a step forward, Charlie winced in pain and took a step back. Mrs. Glenn was hoping to lecture both Charlie and Henry for a while longer.

“Mrs. Glenn, I will take care of this,” Henry said in an attempt to assure her. “A funeral will begin in less than ten minutes.”

After a moment, Mrs. Glenn disappointingly let go of Charlie's ear. Henry stood aside as Charlie headed to the preparing room where Wendy Martin's body was waiting for the funeral to begin. Knowing that people would arrive soon, Henry authoritatively guided Mrs. Glenn back to the front door.

"Again, I am sorry Mrs. Glenn," Henry continued to say. "I will take care of this."

"Be sure that you do!" Mrs. Glenn demanded. She was in the mood to project guilt for this inconvenience and walked very slowly to the front door. "If it happens one more time, he will not be allowed back."

Henry tried to escort Mrs. Glenn a little more forcefully. He quickly opened the front door and saw Wendy Martin's family walking toward the front entrance.

Henry said quickly and softly, "Okay. I will do what is necessary."

Mrs. Glenn turned towards Henry to again scold him when she saw the slight look of terror on his face. Mrs. Glenn then looked towards the

group of people approaching the mortuary. They were dressed in black and obviously very upset.

Mrs. Glenn finally recognized the rush and let go of her hopes for another chance to lecture Henry. She turned around and headed away from the funeral parlor in the opposite direction of Wendy Martin's family. Henry closed the door as quick as he could without slamming it then made a dash for the preparing room.

From a very early age, Charles Wallace, or Charlie as his mother and father addressed him, had a fear and annoyance with the family business. Growing up in a funeral parlor hardened Charles to the idea of death. At the age of three, Charlie was playing with blocks in the preparing room when a dead body fell in front of him. When he was seven, his schoolmates found out about his father's occupation and nick named him Weirdo Wallace. When Charlie was legally able to drive, Henry gave him his first car, the oldest hearse in his fleet. "No girl will want to get in that!" Charlie had thought.

Henry entered the preparing room through its one and only door. Charlie sat in a chair facing the wall. There were three dead bodies covered in

sheets and lying on metal tables in the cold preparing room. The lifeless body of Wendy Martin was in a casket near the door. Whenever Charlie was in trouble, Henry told him to wait in the preparing room. Charlie was often in trouble so he was constantly surrounded by people who have died.

“You only have two more months of school. Why do you keep doing this?” asked Henry.

Charlie quickly turned around and said, “I didn’t start the fight. He called me Weirido Wallace.”

Henry replied, “I don’t care what he called you. You were in a fight. You have a black eye.”

“He is in much worse shape than I am.”

Henry pointed to the casket on his right as he said, “What about Wendy and her family?! Her funeral could have been ruined.”

Charlie didn’t say anything. He only turned back towards the wall.

Henry then pointed to another dead body as he said, “Or what about Mr. Ulness!? He was practically a saint. His funeral is tomorrow and

what is he going to tell God and our family in heaven. A spoiled, brat of a child with a black eye kept interrupting the peaceful atmosphere of those who have died. Don't you think they deserve better than that?"

Charlie remained motionless and silent. He hated the preparing room. He hated his parents. Charlie hated that he had been surrounded by death all of his life. He hated that the people being prepared for funerals had actually lived when he had yet to do anything noteworthy in his entire life.

Charlie tried to hate what his father did for a living, but he knew the Wallace Mortuary and Funeral Parlor had made his father a wealthy man. Men from the bank would appear at the funeral parlor all the time. Charlie assumed the Wallace family could be living in a mansion with servants and butlers, living the high life.

Moments of silence passed between Henry and Charles. Neither of them had any more to say. Henry then turned around and peered through the small window, looking out into the hall. Wendy Martin's family, a few distant relatives, and a couple friends had already arrived for her funeral.

A few of them had even already sat down in the hall.

Henry sat down on a stool and said to Charlie coldly, “Wendy’s ceremony is about to begin. I cannot be seen and you know this is the only door out of here. There’s no way of going anywhere until it’s over. We are here for an hour.”

Charlie started to dream about all the things he could do with his father’s fortune. He dreamed of building such a large estate of money, stocks, and property for himself that everyone would know who he was. He dreamed of escaping to Hollywood and becoming a movie star. He dreamed of shocking the world by truly living and living big! He wished and wanted to do something so astounding, so extraordinary that it would make him immortal, but his dreams greatly amplified the negative feelings he had towards all that surrounded him.

Ten minutes of silence were disrupted when Sheryl came into the room to retrieve Wendy’s casket. Charlie hoped for a way out and asked, “Can I help with the casket mom and then go up to my room?”

Many people referred to Sheryl as a saint, but causing this saint to show her ugly side made a scolding that much worse. Since Charlie had been home, Sheryl hadn't had a moment to give Charlie a stink eye, so she gave him one now.

“Not with that shiner, young man!” She quietly shouted.

Sheryl quickly returned to her sympathetic expression to console those who were grieving in the next room. Charlie returned to utter despair, realizing he had no hope of escape. Henry and his talent for sitting without thought or entertainment had no problem doing nothing for the rest of the hour. Henry even somewhat enjoyed it. Charlie however became angrier as time passed.

During the rest of the hour, Charlie didn't contemplate the best way to escape the room. He began to think about ways to escape the rest of his life. He first thought of running away, but he knew it would leave him broke with no place to live. He briefly thought of getting a job and moving out, but Charlie recognized how much work that would take. He would also never shock the world as he wanted to do by getting a job.

Charlie then thought of a solution. It was a plan his father would not only agree to but he would pay for it. He didn't get straight A's in his classes, but he didn't fail them either.

Wendy's ceremony concluded. Her family and friends left the main room and went into the reception where food was waiting for them.

Henry stood and said, "People are leaving. We can go now."

Charlie attempted the first step in his plan, getting his father's approval and his check book. "I won't get in any more fights," he said.

"Good," replied Henry.

Charlie then continued, "...if you pay for me to go to college."

"What college is that?"

"I don't know yet," Charlie said, but what he really thought was, "Any college that's far away from here."

Chapter 2

Returning Home

Charles Wallace didn't feel any sense of loss when he heard about his parents passing. He hadn't seen them for ten years. He hadn't stepped foot in the Wallace Mortuary and Funeral Parlor in Davenport, Pennsylvania since 1940.

Charles was impressed by a few things as he pulled into the new, freshly paved parking lot outside of his father's freshly painted Funeral Parlor. It didn't look like the Wallace Mortuary and Funeral Parlor he grew up in at all. The sign on the building had also changed. It no longer said Wallace Mortuary and Funeral Parlor. Instead, it just said Funeral Home.

Charles thought the changes were remarkable. After finishing three years of a business degree in eight years, Charles felt he knew everything that schools, universities, and professors could tell him about economics and business. He knew the updates to the exterior of

the funeral home would bring in even more grieving families into his family's business. He knew the pleasant appearance of the building made it that much more valuable when he sells it. In fact, Charles knew for certain he would have graduated from college if not for the stupidity of many of his professors.

Though Charles would never admit it, he did have a nostalgic urge to visit the place where his father, Henry Wallace, spent the majority of his life. Charles didn't acknowledge this feeling of remembering his past. Instead, he assured himself that he was simply checking out one of the many things he was bound to inherit. From the beautiful, recently renovated appearance of the building before him, he was looking that much more forward to the appointment he had with the executor of his father's estate later that afternoon.

As Charles walked up to the front door, the same door he and his mother and father had used many times, he remembered how often he was brought home by a teacher. He reached up and felt the fleshy part of his right ear. He swore the lobe of his right ear was longer than his left from getting in trouble so often. He wished Mrs. Glenn was in front of the door with him right then.

Charles knew his Italian suit, brilliant financial mind, and large inheritance would have made her eat her words.

Charles opened the door and stepped inside. Everything was different inside the funeral home. The carpets were soft in a deep red color. There was flowery wall paper on every wall. The dark wood front desk next to the entrance was layered in beautiful brochures and business cards. All of the changes met Charles's overwhelming satisfaction.

Above the front desk hung a picture of a man named James Brandon with an inscription, EXECUTOR AND MANAGER. The large, jolly man in the picture suddenly appeared from the preparing room. "May I help you?" he asked.

Recognizing him from the picture, Charles said merrily, "You must be James."

"Yes, how can I be of service?" asked James with the same merriment.

"You must work for my father."

James assumed his frequent role of sympathizer and counselor for the grieving souls

who required his services. His caring nature was also heightened by his salesmanship and his desire for potential clients to empty their wallets.

James asked, “Has your father passed away recently?”

“Yes. Mrs. Wallace too, unfortunately.”

Two funerals at the same time were very exciting for James. It could be twice the money for one service. James responded, “Mrs. Wallace? I’m so sorry to hear about that. Are we assisting in any funeral arrangements here?”

“I’m not sure. I’m meeting with my father’s lawyer this afternoon.”

“Well, we offer many services here and we would...”

Charles chuckled and realized James’s confusion. Charles interrupted and said, “No...I’m sorry. I mean you must **WORK** for my father, or used to work for my father. I’m Charles. Henry is my father. I guess that means I’m going to be your new boss.”

James's look of confusion defied Charles's smug look. "I don't quite follow. You are looking for funeral arrangements?" James asked.

"No, this is my father's funeral home."

James finally recalled Charles's reference. "Oh, Henry Wallace passed away? Oh, I'm so sorry to hear about that."

Showing no signs of wanting to talk about his father and mother, Charles steered the conversation to what was really on his mind. He asked, "So, how is the business? I'm honestly surprised that my father brought someone else in to run it for him."

"Well this used to be your father's funeral home," James said. "I am the Executor, Manager, and Owner of this Funeral Home. I bought it from Henry. Again, I'm sorry to hear about his passing."

Charles's facial expression quickly reversed into a look of confusion. James however kept fresh in his mind that Charles's mother and father had died and maintained his sympathetic appearance. James also still hoped he could make a sale.

Charles could only muster a single question, “My father sold the funeral home?”

“Yes, about three years ago.”

Charles continued, still perplexed. “It was his life. It made him rich.”

A tall, skinny man in a plastic apron and gloves appeared behind James. Charles shivered from the similar look of this tall, skinny man to his father. Charles instinctively lowered his head and was about to head towards the preparing room when the tall, skinny man spoke.

“Mr. Curstmeyer is ready.”

“Thank you, Dan. I’ll be back in a moment,” James replied.

Charles found it more than coincidental that the tall, skinny man’s skin color was extremely white and pale. He assumed all people who prepare the dead must have that white, bony complexion. It further convinced Charles that working closely to the dead only brought you closer to death.

The white, bony man again spoke, “Which cemetery is Curstmeyer going to?”

“The new Wallace Cemetery over on Twenty Third Avenue. By downtown,” James replied. “He’ll be the first to be buried there.”

Charles’s eyes widened as he thought, “what did my father do?”

The Ghosts of Wallace Towers

Danny knew it would be the event of the decade. “Don’t miss this one!” said People magazine. Rolling Stone named it “the scariest television show since Terror in Tucson.” A critic at the Los Angeles Times even reported “you’ll need a night light after this one!”

Danny had seen commercial after commercial spouting critic’s reviews of the upcoming show. He had waited months since the season finale in May. His number one television show was about to begin again.

Screams, music, and ethereal sound effects erupted from the television. A dramatic voice then said, “It’s been called the most terrifying place on earth, the scene of countless reports of paranormal phenomenon, satanic rituals, and psychotic breakdowns. It gained the most attention after three students were dared to spend one night inside Tower B; one of them was sent to a psychiatric

ward, one was sentenced to life in prison, and one was brutally murdered. Tonight, we dive deeper into the abyss, into the darkest corners of hell. I am your host, David Landers. This is *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*.”

Flashes of light and scenes from last season exploded on the television. Danny’s eyes grew large in anticipation. Finally, the title of the show dripped in blood appeared in front of a picture of the massive structure of towers and buildings.

It was 7pm on Thursday night, the night of the hour long season premiere of Danny’s favorite television show. In the season finale, *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* had made huge promises for this upcoming episode. The show hinted that they caught a ghost on film. They played a short clip when the host was so frightened, he screamed like a girl. The most exciting of all, the season finale implied that one of the crewmen becomes possessed and viciously attacked another crew member while filming. The season finale ended with an ambulance speeding to a hospital.

Danny was sure the next hour would be the greatest of his life, or he could miss it all.

Danny was convinced he must do something to stop the possibility of being ripped away from what could be the most entertaining hour of his life. A commercial appeared right after the title credits as it usually does. He picked up his cell phone and committed to the story he created last night. He would say that he jammed his finger playing basketball. How could he play the piano with a swollen finger?

He dialed. In the most unfortunate timing, his mom yelled for him from downstairs as soon as the phone started to ring. “Danny, come downstairs and start practicing.”

He quickly yelled back, “I’ll be down in a second.” He continued to wait until Mr. Curstmeyer picked up his phone. After a couple more seconds, Danny heard the click of the phone being answered. There was a very long pause. Then, a low and scratchy voice said “hmlo?”

Danny froze up. Was this Mr. Curstmeyer? His voice was so raspy that Danny didn’t understand what was said.

Silence resumed until Mr. Curstmeyer again said, “hello!?”

“Mr. Curstmeyer?” Danny said nervously.

“Yes?”

“This is Danny. I jammed my finger playing basketball today. I can’t move it.”

Silence again resumed and *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* returned from commercials.

“Which hand?” asked Mr. Curstmeyer.

Danny looked at his hands. Since he was right handed, it was only natural that his right hand would get hurt playing basketball. “My right hand,” he said.

“We need to do some extra work on your left hand scales,” said Mr. Curstmeyer plainly. “We’ll spend the extra time tonight. So, I’ll see you in about a half hour.”

Danny’s mom again yelled from downstairs. “Who are you talking to?”

Danny unfortunately hadn’t come up with a plan B. He was desperate for any excuse to get out of his lesson. He then blurted out, “oh, actually it’s my left hand that’s hurt. I guess I can’t play those scales.”

Mr. Curstmeyer was not fazed by this information at all. He said, “Then we will learn the melody of a piano duet. I have it right here in my hand. I will be heading out the door in 5 minutes.”

Danny’s cell phone beeped. He pulled the phone from his ear to look at the screen. His mom downstairs had used her cell phone to call him. Danny heard Mr. Curstmeyer chuckle and say, “See you soon.” Danny then pushed the flash button.

Danny’s mom asked, “Danny, who are you talking to?”

“No one,” said Danny.

“Danny, it would be much easier if you told me. It would save me the time from checking the history of your phone use online?”

Danny would have loved having a phone if he could actually call people without his mom knowing about it. His mom worked for a cell phone company and was an expert in restricting his phone use. He could only make calls from 4pm to 8pm on weeknights and 8am to 6pm on weekends. His mom would also check his history online every

week. Danny knew she would eventually find out that he called Mr. Curstmeyer. If not now, then sometime soon.

“I called Mr. Curstmeyer,” he said.

“Danny! Don’t disturb Mr. Curstmeyer,” his mom scolded. “Come downstairs and get ready for your lesson, he’ll be here in a half hour.”

“But mom, *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* is on!”

“Danny, I don’t like you watching those scary television shows. You won’t be able to sleep.”

Danny’s mom was referring to a night six years ago. Danny had watched a scary movie about killer spiders at a friend’s house. It was the only night in his life that he knocked on his mother’s door to tell her he couldn’t sleep.

Danny was now fourteen and felt he was more than mature enough to watch these types of shows. “Mom, I was eight. It’s been six years. I can watch R rated movies without getting scared.”

Danny's mom didn't like the sound of this, but she stopped the debate hoping the obsession with this scary television show was only a phase.

"Alright, Danny," she said. "If you would like to watch your show instead of practicing, that's fine. But you have to practice for an hour after your lesson."

Danny didn't want to practice after his lesson either, but he could at least watch a little more of his show.

"Alright. I'll practice for an hour after my lesson," he said.

"Come down at 7:25 sharp."

Danny hung up the phone quickly and returned to his show. Ethereal music continued to play as David Landers said, "Gold Sterling Inc. once occupied the 32nd floor of tower C, but the employees of this once shining enterprise were not well..."

Chapter 4

Creepy Curstmeyer

Danny was glued to the television for twenty straight minutes. He was broken out of his trance when he heard his cell phone beep. He looked at the arriving text message from his mother. It said, “It’s 7:26! Time to come down and get ready for your lesson!”

The television show switched to a commercial for stocks and trading. Danny turned off the television with a sigh and a grunt. He trampled down the stairs, firmly planting his foot on each, creaky wooden stair to be sure his mom heard him coming down.

Danny stopped and looked at the old upright piano in the living room. It was dark brown with a layer of dust that couldn’t be removed no matter how hard a person scrubbed. Several keys were broken; the tops of a few white keys were chipped or removed completely, showing the wood underneath. The piano bench was very tall and

heavy with a hard, flat surface that was very unpleasant to sit on. Danny's feet didn't touch the ground when he sat on it. The piano had been in the corner of the house as long as Danny remembered.

Danny's mother enjoyed playing the piano more than Danny, but she wasn't very good. When she was sitting at the piano, she would act very different. She always played the same three songs or she would just look at the old piano fondly.

Danny's mom was in the kitchen, working on the computer. "I don't hear anything," she said loudly through the door.

Danny didn't sit down at the piano yet. He only poked and pecked at the keys randomly as he stood next to it. He put in as little thought as possible to what he was doing at the piano. Instead, he started to imagine what was on the show he was missing.

"Danny, what are you doing?" his mom asked from the other room.

Matching her volume, Danny said, "I'm just waiting for my lesson."

Danny's mom peeked into the living room and saw Danny standing next to the piano, being very unproductive. "Where's your music?" she asked.

Danny had a sudden moment of panic. He couldn't remember where he put his music. Every time Danny did not have his music, Mr. Curstmeyer would make him play boring scales and arpeggios up and down the piano for the entire half hour lesson. Mr. Curstmeyer always said it builds technique and skill at the piano, but Danny considered it punishment for forgetting his music.

Danny looked in the stacks of papers on top of the piano as he asked, "Do you know where it is, mom?"

Three loud knocks rang through the oak front door and into the entire house. Mr. Curstmeyer never used the doorbell. Danny's mom walked to the door as three loud and deep sounding knocks again rang through the front door. She reached the door and opened it.

"Hello, Carl," she said sweetly.

"Greetings, Claire," Mr. Curstmeyer said kindly. He then walked into the house using an

old, wooden cane. Danny thought he moved quickly for someone that old.

Few people in the world called Danny's mom Claire. Everyone called her Mrs. Smith, except for Danny's grandparents who lived in Florida and their neighbor and Claire's best friend Mrs. Campbell. Danny never understood why they always greeted each other like this. As far as Danny knew, they never saw or spoke to each other outside the weekly torture of his piano lessons.

Mr. Curstmeyer walked over to Danny and the piano. He wore the same suit every week, dark brown faded from years of use. He wore a brown hat that at one time held its edges upright, but now the hat just flopped down towards the ground. Danny was glad Mr. Curstmeyer didn't remove his hat. He had wild, spastic white hair that pointed out in different directions. There was a dusty, ripe odor that followed Mr. Curstmeyer in as he walked. Danny's friends called him Creepy Curstmeyer.

Mr. Curstmeyer turned to Danny who received the full and horrible blow of Creepy Curstmeyer's appearance. The old, short man held

his natural grimace. He rarely smiled. The few times Danny saw Mr. Curstmeyer open his mouth, he saw exceptionally bad, yellow teeth that were spread apart and jagged.

“Danny?” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Whenever Creepy Curstmeyer said Danny’s name, it sounded like a question. This greatly annoyed Danny. The raising of pitch at the end of his name gave him chills up his spine. It reminded Danny of the things Mr. Curstmeyer always asked him to do: play this chord, play this scale, use this finger, play it again...

“Hello, Mr. Curstmeyer,” replied Danny.

“Where’s your music, Danny?”

Danny reluctantly said, “I don’t know.”

Mr. Curstmeyer and Mrs. Smith looked at each other. Mrs. Curstmeyer said, “Well, Claire, what should we do?”

Mrs. Smith replied, “Well, Danny has a choice. He can have his lesson without music or he can practice for another half hour tomorrow evening.”

“I’ll practice tomorrow,” Danny said immediately. He didn’t think there was much of a choice. Anything was better than playing scales for a half hour.

Mrs. Smith smirked and said, “You put your music in the piano bench like I had asked last week.”

Danny was very annoyed. He lifted the top of the piano bench. It was within his arm’s reach the entire time. Mrs. Smith smiled as Danny grabbed his music. She then headed back to the kitchen to continue working.

Mr. Curstmeyer sat in a wooden chair next to the piano and instructed Danny to play the G major scale. Danny played it with moderate success, but Mr. Curstmeyer was out for perfection today.

“You can’t miss a single note when you play your scale,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “Play it again, slowly.”

Three minutes of playing the same eight notes led to eight minutes of playing the same fifteen notes. After finally playing the scale perfectly three times, Mr. Curstmeyer asked Danny

to play the song they had been working on for the past three months. Danny didn't play more than a few seconds of the song before Mr. Curstmeyer interrupted.

“It's supposed to be an F#,” Mr. Curstmeyer interjected. “Play it again.”

Danny tried it again but still missed the single note.

“Missed it again,” Mr. Curstmeyer announced. “From the beginning.”

Danny continued to play the first ten seconds of the song over and over again without any luck of getting it right. Every time Danny would start the song, Mr. Curstmeyer would say that he missed a note or was playing too fast or paused too long or didn't pause long enough or he forgot to play softly...

Mr. Curstmeyer never looked at the music. He didn't look at Danny. He would often close his eyes, lower his head, and lean on his cane as he listened to Danny play. He would then look up slightly to notify Danny that he didn't play it correctly. He then instructed Danny to start again

from the beginning. This pattern occurred during most of Danny's lessons.

A sudden yell of excitement came from the house next door.

"That was so cool!" screamed Danny's friend Jack.

Danny could see Jack's room through the window next to the piano. It flickered with light from the television. Danny knew Jack was watching *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*. Whatever excitement was happening in the season premiere, Danny was missing it.

"You missed the F# again," said Mr. Crustmeyer with frustration. "I think we need to play the G major scale a few more times."

Danny looked up again at Jack's window. He tried to figure out what was going on in the show through the flicker of light that bounced off of Jack's walls. Was a ghost in Wallace Towers caught on film? Were the cameramen attacking each other? Danny's gaze was disrupted as Jack again yelled, "Awesome!"

Danny knew it was too late. Even if the lesson ended that second, he couldn't get to the television fast enough to see what had happened.

"Danny?" said Mr. Curstmeyer. "Are you still there? You need to play the piano."

Danny then uttered a question without thinking. He said sarcastically, "how about you play the piano and I'll tell you that you aren't playing it right?"

Mr. Curstmeyer replied, "I am not the one who needs the practice."

Both Danny and Mr. Curstmeyer waited tensely for the next person to speak. After a couple minutes, Mr. Curstmeyer stood up from his chair and began to walk to the door. In the kitchen, Mrs. Smith noticed the music had stopped and heard Mr. Curstmeyer get up from the creaky, wooden chair. She looked at the clock on the microwave and was slightly confused. The half hour lesson had only lasted twenty-two minutes. She entered the living room only to see Mr. Curstmeyer at the door ready to leave.

Mr. Curstmeyer turned to Mrs. Smith and said, "Claire, my dear, I think we are about done."

Mrs. Smith watched Mr. Curstmeyer open and walk through the door. She then turned and looked at Danny who was still sitting on the piano bench looking very unhappy. The question Mrs. Smith thought to herself was, “are they done for this lesson or permanently?”

A Second Chance

Danny had missed it!

“What did the ghost look like?” Andrew asked.

Danny, Jack, Andrew, and Mike were talking vigorously about the season premiere of *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*. Jack answered with excitement, “It was this light that moved around the room really fast.”

“Who got possessed?!” Danny asked with even more intensity. “Was it Carl or Larry?”

Jack again answered, “Carl was possessed. They were in this room that gives off heat to the rest of the building.”

“The furnace,” Andrew said nervously. Andrew was a short sixth grader with glasses who didn’t watch *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*. He wanted to watch the show, but he was too scared.

He knew everything about the show from asking his friends the day after each episode.

“Don’t we know all about Wallace Towers?!” Jack said to Andrew mockingly. Jack, the most adventurous sixth grader at the table, was always ready with a quick remark. He was tall and everyone noticed him because of his large mop of bright red, curly hair. He continued to playfully taunt Andrew saying, “You better be careful. If you know too much, the ghosts will come after you!”

“Shut up, Jack Campbell!” Andrew said with as much courage as he could muster.

Danny joined in and mocked both Jack and Andrew saying, “Yeah! Shut up, Mr. Camp Bull!”

It was the Friday before Fall break and the lunch room was noisier than usual. Every student in the school was ready for a week away from teachers, lectures, and homework.

Andrew anxiously asked, “Did the ghost say anything?”

Mike was next to Jack on the other end of the lunch table. He was very good at sports and

was usually referred to as the tough guy. He answered Andrew's question in a way that displayed his strength. "No. You could hear this low howling. Like a foghorn."

"Guess what?" Jack said with a smile on his face. He knew Danny had missed the season premiere and he had the greatest news for Danny and the entire table. "Did you see they're having a marathon all weekend?!"

"Really?!" Mike said.

"That's so cool!" Andrew yelled.

Danny was thrilled, but he didn't yell in excitement. "Don't say anything else!" He yelled sternly.

Andrew began to ask anyway, "How bad did the host guy freak out?"

"Stop!" Danny quickly interrupted. Andrew immediately held his tongue. The table became very quiet when Danny said, "I'm watching every episode from the first season again, all the way to last night's season premiere. Don't spoil it for me."

Chapter 6

The Marathon

The first weekend of Fall break was the only two days in the Fall semester when Danny's mom would let him choose what he wanted to do. Mrs. Smith wasn't thrilled that Danny wanted to spend both of those days sitting in front of the television.

Mrs. Smith put every game, toy, and piece of sporting equipment they owned in the room next to Danny's bedroom. She called it the activity room. It also had the best television and the most comfortable couch in the entire house. Danny often begged his mom for a TV in his own room, but Mrs. Smith didn't want Danny to watch a lot of television.

Mrs. Smith organized the activity room to discourage Danny from watching a lot of TV. It was impossible to sit in the comfortable couch and watch television at the same time. She put a long, wooden desk against the wall opposite the television screen. The brown, comfortable couch

faced the empty wall. The closet and desk in the activity room were full of things Danny could do. There were board games, basketballs, baseballs, and even blocks, Legos, and Tinker toys to build things, but for Danny, these were no match for his favorite television show or even a rerun of *Sponge Bob Square Pants* for that matter.

Danny had watched television sitting on the floor of the activity room plenty of times, but *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* marathon was going to begin in fifteen minutes. Since the twenty-six hour marathon would last until 6pm the next day, Danny spent a few minutes rearranging the furniture.

The television was big and heavy. It sat on a stand that left deep imprints in the carpet. Danny could only move it a couple inches at a time. Each time he attempted to lift, he sincerely wished they had a flat screen. The couch had a hideaway bed that folded out from underneath the cushions. It was even heavier than the TV and stand.

Mrs. Smith was working on her computer in the kitchen when she heard the furniture being shuffled around upstairs. She went up the stairs and cracked open the door of the activity room to

see what Danny was up to. Danny had moved the television and the couch just enough so they faced each other.

Mrs. Smith noticed that Danny was well prepared for his marathon. The couch was covered with extra pillows and cushions from the rest of the house. Danny also brought up some bottles of water, a box of cookies, and two peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. At any other time of the year, Mrs. Smith wouldn't have let Danny do this, but she resolved to let Danny watch his show. She would make sure he was much more active through the rest of his Fall break.

David Landers came on the television screen and the very first episode of *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* started to play. He said, "The Wallace Towers were an experiment of modern architecture. Once considered the largest building ever constructed, it was the busiest center of business in the United States in 1951. But sounds and creaks, panic and screams heard in the distance shut down Wallace Towers. Abandoned for sixty years, it is now known only as the birthplace of fear, an infestation of evil. I am your host, David Landers. This is *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*."

Danny usually would start to shout and dance at the beginning of his show, but he conserved his energy. He knew he would see the title credits of the show at least twenty-five more times. He simply waited for them to finish in the comfort of pillows and cushions on the couch.

Danny knew the very first episode by heart and recited many parts of the opening monologue. David Landers was filmed in front of the massive structure of the Wallace Towers sometime during the night when he said, “Henry Wallace, founder of the Wallace Funeral Parlor, wanted his only son, Charles Wallace, to follow in his footsteps and take over the family business. But Charles clearly did not share his father’s business interests. So Henry Wallace used his fortune to buy a large piece of land to build a beautiful cemetery. But Henry Wallace and his wife Sheryl died three days before the cemetery was set to accept its first tenets.”

The show turned to a historian named Dr. Alexander Mickelson. He was frequently a guest on *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*. He was an older man with gray hair, thick glasses, a high voice, and a mouth that always seemed to be puckered. He was very excited to be on the show.

Dr. Mickelson further explained the history of Wallace Towers saying, “After Henry and Sheryl Wallace died, their son, Charles Wallace, did everything he could do to stop the cemetery from opening. He locked the front gate and refused to bury anyone. A few funeral processions arrived on the day the cemetery was set to open, but Charles turned them all away. He even yelled at the widow of Sherman Montgomery. Mr. Montgomery had been scheduled to be buried at the Wallace Cemetery for two weeks before Charles arrived.”

The screen then displayed a picture of an old Charles Wallace. Danny had seen the picture plenty of times, but now observed more detail in the picture. Charles Wallace was in an expensive suit. His hair was neatly combed. He tried to maintain a dignified expression, but Danny thought he looked extremely unhealthy. Charles’s eyes were sunken into his head. His hair was thin and receding. Danny thought Charles looked like death itself.

The voice of David Landers continued behind the picture and said, “Charles Wallace was in a panic. People were demanding the cemetery be opened so they could bury their loved ones. His

phone rang every fifteen minutes with people furious over the closing of the cemetery. Even the mayor of the city demanded the cemetery be opened as promised.”

David Landers was now in front of the Wallace Towers as he continued to say, “So, the first thing Charles Wallace did to show everyone the property will not be a cemetery was take down the beautiful wrought iron sign welcoming people to the Wallace Cemetery. In its place, he painted the letters on the sign that still exist and hang at the site today.”

The camera panned upward to a large, plywood board. On the board, letters were painted in black. There were streaks of paint dripping down to the ground. The sign said: “Future Site of Wallace Towers, The Gateway to Financial Immortality.”

Dr. Mickelson again picked up the story and said, “So, Charles Wallace hired the Kingman Construction Company to begin working on the towers, but there were no architectural plans. The cemetery was filled with construction workers and lots of equipment: bulldozers, cranes, and lots of piles of steel, but no one knew what to do. There

were no blueprints, no plans. They were put there as a diversion.”

David Landers came on the screen again. He was standing near a hole in the ground just outside of Wallace Towers. He said, “Charles Wallace lost a great deal of money every day the construction workers showed up for work on the property but didn’t do anything. If it continued for very long, he would have no money to build the Wallace Towers. So, he started making the construction company workers work on whatever he could think of. The first thing Charles Wallace had them do was dig. Specifically, he had them dig holes, like this one.” David Landers pointed to the hole in the ground next to him. It was just large enough to fit a dead body or a casket.

Dr. Mickelson continued, “Even though Charles’s father, Henry Wallace, lived like an ordinary man, he was a financial genius! He had a modest home, a small business, and never spent a lot of money, but he had quite a bit of it and was set to take in that much more! The two city cemeteries were almost full if not completely full. The mortuaries were filling up. The funeral parlors did not have any place to bury the dead. Henry Wallace gave his son an opportunity to make

thousands and even millions of dollars selling plots of the cemetery to families of the recently deceased. Instead, Charles Wallace was losing a fortune every day.”

David Landers’s voice then resonated behind a ghostly old picture. It showed the front gate of the property wide open. The site was completely deserted. David said, “Construction workers were on the property during the day, but when they left the site, there was no one to guard the cemetery. On May 7th, 1948, Wallace Towers received its first ghostly residents.”

Dr. Mickelson then said, “The mayor was furious with Charles Wallace. He constantly demanded the cemetery be opened. After six days of demands and no response, the city took a drastic measure to try and force Charles Wallace to open the cemetery. The city broke the lock of the cemetery gate one night and brought fifty-eight bodies into the cemetery. They saw the holes in the construction site and assumed they were made before Charles Wallace took over the property.”

David Landers’s voice then became very compelling. He said, “The next morning was a nightmare for the workers of the Kingman

Construction Company. They continued to fill and empty holes, excavate and work on the property. They worked for hours before they realized dead bodies were scattered throughout the construction site.”

A newspaper article from May 8th, 1948 flashed on the screen. The headline said, “Hell on Earth!”

The Season premiere

Hours had passed. It was 11pm and the fifth episode of the first season was on. David Landers was interviewing John Copeland, the former assistant manager of a popular and widely used company called Theatre Sets, Inc. They constructed sets and made costumes for theatre companies around the country. John was twenty-eight when he worked at the company, but when he was interviewed by David Landers last season, he showed many of the years that had passed since his youthful days of working for a theatre company. Heavy bags were under his eyes and his face had many wrinkles. He was dressed in an old, flannel shirt and was obviously nervous about the topic of the Wallace Towers.

David asked, “You were in charge of Theatre Sets, Inc. in 1951?”

“Yes,” replied John.

“Are you responsible for the disappearance of Amy Lipska?”

“Theatre Sets had nothing to do with her disappearance,” John answered aggressively.

“Do you know that her soul still haunts the 12th floor of Tower A?”

“The towers had taken her!” John yelled. He quickly retracted his emotions as he continued. “It wasn’t the fault of anyone. She was there one day and gone the next. The last anyone saw of her, she went inside her office, which has no other exit. She never came out.”

John was still quite frightened and distraught from the thought of the disappearance of his friend, Amy Lipska, but Danny didn’t notice. Danny’s interest in his favorite television program of all time was less than enthusiastic as he started to feel tired. He had seen this episode before.

Danny jumped when his mom opened the door.

“Danny, are you going to sleep?” she asked.

“No, I’m staying up to watch the show,” Danny said with determination.

Mrs. Smith new Danny would eventually fall asleep. She saw how comfortable Danny was in cushions and pillows on the incredibly comfortable couch. Knowing sleep was not far away, Mrs. Smith let Danny stay in the activity room for the night.

She said, “Okay, but you need to brush your teeth and get ready for bed now. Then you can stay in here as long as you like.”

Danny threw off the blankets and pillows that surrounded him on the couch. He quickly went to the bathroom, washed his hands, brushed his teeth, and put on some comfortable clothes. He was back in front of the television within five minutes, just in time to see David Landers and his crew step into Amy’s office on the 12th floor, where the young woman disappeared. In another two minutes, Danny fell asleep.

Danny was startled! There was a shriek, then a scream! He tried to jump up from the couch but became tangled in the blankets. He fell on the floor with a thud. He then looked up at the television to see Mr. Mickelson on the screen describing the murder of Ellen Carpenter in 1976. It was 3:06am and the 9th episode was on the television. Danny chuckled a little then fell back asleep on the floor, right where he fell.

Since 8:37am, when Danny woke up, he was never too far away from the television. He however did take a few long breaks from *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* marathon. He was never really impressed with episodes sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen when the show started reporting on the history of Charles Wallace and his family. He took plenty of time to eat, drink, and stretch his legs during those episodes.

Mrs. Smith stopped by to check on Danny once again at 5:42pm. She was amazed her son was still functioning after an entire day of watching television, but was frustrated by how unproductive Danny had been on his first day off from school.

“Is it almost over?” Mrs. Smith asked.

Danny replied hurriedly, “The season premiere that I missed because of Mr. Curstmeyer is on in fifteen minutes.”

“Well, tonight is our night to have dinner,” Mrs. Smith said. “I hope there are more things going on in your life than this haunted building.”

Danny had planned on talking with his friends about the marathon tonight. “Do we have to?” he said.

“Yes! Sunday night, we always have dinner.”

Danny folded his arms and turned back towards the television as he said, “Fine.”

As Mrs. Smith closed the door to the activity room, she said, “Come down when your show is over.”

Danny vividly remembered the first twenty-five minutes of the season premiere he had seen on Thursday. By the time the season premiere began, he had completely lost interest in watching parts of the show he had already seen. After more than twenty-four hours, he was ready to watch something new and fresh.

His attention spiked as a commercial break came on the television. He even said out loud, “Okay! This is when I had to go play the stupid piano.”

When the show returned from the commercial, something happened that Danny didn’t expect. David Landers, who was usually in or near the Wallace Towers, was sitting in a chair in a studio looking right at Danny. The host of *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* was rarely in the studio unless he was interviewing someone.

David Landers looked into the camera and said, “On a few occasions, we must all look at our progress, our art, our craft and ask is our product, our show worth the sacrifices we make. I ask that question now because we at *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* have knowingly put members of our own crew in harm’s way.”

David Landers then looked through the screen with intensity. Danny could swear the host of his favorite television show was looking specifically at him. David Landers said, “What we now show you, the terrible things that happened this past summer, we show you with a new goal in mind; a goal for this season and for the remainder of this show’s existence. The Wallace Towers should be destroyed.”

Danny gasped as he heard David Landers say this. Danny had dreamed of some day exploring the Wallace Towers for himself. He wasn’t afraid. He could run through that place and not think anything of it. He suddenly feared he wouldn’t get his chance if the towers were destroyed.

David Landers continued, “Over the course of last season, we have shown you the depth of horror, the evil presence infested in this haunted building. Until now, we have dismissed the horrible events that have happened at the Wallace Towers as being brought on by the mistakes and own foolishness of those who have caused them. We now know the level of hideousness, immorality, and wickedness in these towers and

collectively believe they should not exist, even at the expense of losing this television program.”

David Landers paused for a long time. Danny was shocked. *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* wasn't a prime time show and it didn't have any popular stars or actors, but every kid Danny knew watched the show. He wondered what would happen if they took it off the air.

David Landers slowly leaned back in his chair and said, “We now show you the conclusion of our season's premiere without commercial interruption.”

The screen flashed white. David Landers again appeared on the screen. He wasn't in the studio anymore. He was in the Wallace Towers.

The time and date, 11:35pm, June 7th, 2010, were shown in the bottom right hand corner of the screen when David turned around and said to his crew, “You guys ready?”

The crew was in high spirits and each one said enthusiastically, “Ready!” “Yep!” “Let's go!” David Landers then walked up to an old, metal door that said FURNACE ROOM – MAINTENANCE ONLY.

Chapter 8

The Furnace Room

The cameras were rolling as David, Bill, Larry and Brad walked up to an old, metal door that said FURNACE ROOM – MAINTENANCE ONLY. David turned around and said to his crew, “You guys ready?”

Bill replied enthusiastically, “Yep!”

Brad also replied with energy, “Let’s go!”

Larry simply said, “ready.”

David took a breath then looked into the camera and said, “The largest concentration of paranormal activity has occurred in Tower B. It is also the location of the most horrific events in the history of the Wallace Towers. We now enter the heart of...wait a second!”

David motioned for Bill to lower the camera. Bill was surprised. He thought it was going great, but he realized he frequently thought

that. Bill was a big guy. He was paid to hold the camera. He wasn't paid for his opinions on the quality of production. Bill said anyway, "What's wrong? You were doing fine."

David said, "I know. I'm just thinking about what should happen next."

Larry was a few steps behind them and was intrigued by David's thought. Larry was the creative mind behind the show. He was a young, skinny guy with glasses who often came up with ideas on location. He carried around a small camera, much smaller than the one on Bill's shoulders, just in case the other two cameras had missed something.

David said to Larry, "I think we should open the door then the camera should go through first. It will make the audience feel like they are actually entering the room themselves."

Larry replied, "Great idea! Bill, when David opens the door, I want you to go through and get a great panoramic view of the room."

Bill said, "Sounds great! Let's roll!"

Larry then turned to Brad just behind him. Brad carried the other large, heavy camera. Larry said, “Brad, make sure you’re watching Bill when he enters.”

Bill was thrilled by this news. Every time he appeared on camera, he would receive a little bonus in his pay check. His mom would also call him to say she saw him on television.

Larry then shouted, “Places!” Everyone was ready to start shooting again.

David began his lines once more, “The largest concentration of paranormal activity at Wallace Towers has occurred in Tower B. This is the tower with the most horrific, gruesome events in the history of the entire structure. We now enter the heart of Tower B: the Furnace Room, the place of the first suicide and the first murder to occur in Wallace Towers. All that remains is the decrepit ruins of multiple satanic rituals that occurred in the 1960’s. Underneath the Furnace Room, mixed in with the steel and foundation of the entire building, is believed to be the final resting place of the sixty souls unfortunately buried here.”

David Landers opened the creaking door and Bill stepped forward with his camera. Beyond the door, Bill stepped onto a catwalk, a narrow path high above the floor. Bill and the camera then looked down. He was three stories up. He could see through the metal catwalk that held him up. Robes, sticks, and paint were scattered throughout the huge room. He then saw a large metal box in the middle of the room. Suddenly, a large flame burst out of the top of the metal box.

Bill began to say, “Holy c...” when he and his camera were knocked backwards. Bill landed on his back. The camera fell down from the catwalk onto the ground three stories below.

Larry yelled, “Bill!”

Bill flipped over and looked back at Brad. Brad was pointing his camera directly at Bill. From behind the camera, Brad asked, “Bill? You okay?”

Bill then said, “Did you get the shot?”

Brad said with a smile on his face, “Yeah! It looked awesome!”

“Then I’m just fine,” Bill said as he again rose to his feet.

Larry then said, “You are most definitely not fine, Bill! That camera costs ten thousand dollars!”

Bill looked over the side of the catwalk down at the camera below. Larry then continued, “This is not acceptable. We can’t leave the camera down there.”

“I’ll go get it,” Bill said annoyed. “Have I ever left a camera behind?”

Bill made his way around the catwalk, shielding his face from blasts of heat that came from the furnace. There was a circle stair case in the corner. Bill easily descended the stairs and walked over to his camera. He picked it up and looked at it.

Bill yelled up to everyone on the catwalk, “It’s still filming, but I’m sure there are a few things wrong with it.” No one on the catwalk hear him. The furnace was making too much noise. When he saw that no one had heard him, Bill again yelled even louder, “It’s busted!”

Larry was not pleased. He said sarcastically, “Great. That will make this so much easier.”

After Bill examined his camera, he began to look around the room. Dried red paint was splashed over the walls. Pieces of wood were on the ground around his feet. There was a robe hanging on some metal shrapnel.

Bill yelled very loudly up to everyone else. “You guys have to come down here! There’s so many great shots, I can’t even start to explain.”

Larry immediately said, “Brad, go down and get some shots.” Brad did as he was told and made his way to the circle stair case, filming as he walked.

David Landers was ready to go down too, but Larry stopped him. “Not you David. I’ll continue to film things up here. Let’s do some more lines.”

David however was not thinking straight at the moment. All he could do was look down at the giant metal box that spewed flames up in the air.

Brad completed his walk to the circle stair case and filmed his descent down the stairs. When he reached the bottom, he pointed the camera at Bill. Bill was reaching for the black robe.

“Bill, what are you doing?” yelled Brad.

Bill did not answer. He continued to slowly reach for the robe.

Brad again attempted to talk with Bill. He yelled, “Hey Bill, is this furnace supposed to be on? I thought this place was abandoned.”

Bill’s hand had reached the black robe. He grasped it tight. Liquid started to ooze between his fingers. Suddenly, the furnace let out a ball of fire rising very high. Brad turned away from the massive furnace to protect his skin from the heat. Bill did not flinch. His arm was still stretched out holding the robe. His skin sizzled from the burst of heat.

David woke from his trance at the sight of the massive burst of fire. He saw his cameraman getting singed from the flames. He yelled, “Bill!” as he ran to the circle stair case in the corner.

Larry stepped forward and tried to grab David. Then, an even greater burst of fire and heat rose from the furnace. Larry was exposed high on the catwalk and the flame headed straight for him. He covered his face as he screamed. He jumped back through the old, metal door and landed hard on the ground. The clothes on his arms turned to black.

After the second burst of flame, Brad again yelled for Bill. “Bill, we got to get out of here!”

Brad felt David reach the bottom of the stairs behind him. He pointed his camera again at Bill.

Bill was still not fazed from the blasts of heat and flame. He slowly turned towards David and Brad. He still clutched the robe in his hands. His eyes narrowed. A sound came from his mouth like a growl and a slow gasp for air. At first, he walked slowly towards Brad and David. His pace quickly sped up as he leaped for Brad.

“Bill! Stop!” yelled Brad. He dropped his camera as Bill swung his arms at him. Brad tried to protect himself when Bill’s mouth, still making a hideous sound, bit down on Brad’s neck. Brad screamed in pain.

David jumped from the stairs and tackled Bill. Bill and David were thrown to the ground and Bill's grip on the black robe was lost. David immediately rose to his feet. Bill remained motionless on the ground.

Brad yelled to David, "Get the robe! Get the robe!"

David began to reach for the robe when Brad again yelled, "Don't use your hands!"

David stopped. He remembered that Bill had reached for the robe just before this chaos. David then picked up a stick from the ground and used it to pick up the black cloth. With a great push, David threw the stick and robe on the fire that leapt out of the furnace.

As the robe hit the flame, collections of screams erupted from the furnace and everyone plugged their ears. Brad again dropped his camera. They suddenly felt light headed, like they were going to pass out. The added kindle of clothing and wood to the furnace made the flames reach even higher in a great burst. None of them could move as they dropped to their knees in pain. They knew it was the screams of sixty souls burning in the steel underneath the furnace.

Each of them heard a different voice speaking something different to each of them.

Bill heard, “Get out!”

David heard, “You will not survive!”

Brad heard, “Your end is near!”

Larry awoke from his fall. He stood up, ran back into the furnace room and out onto the catwalk again. He looked down on the other three. Each of them had looks of horror on their faces. Larry then heard a deep, horrifying voice come from the furnace. The voice said, “Run!”

Larry yelled down to his friends, “Move it! Get out of there!”

Larry’s feet then suddenly fell from underneath him. The catwalk was dropping. Larry ran for the circle stairs and grabbed a pole just as the catwalk fell to the ground. The sharp sound of metal twisting and bending filled the room when the long catwalk fell on the steel below.

David, Brad, Bill, and Larry clung to the circle stair case as the ground started to shake.

“We got to get out of here!” yelled Larry.

Each looked around the room, desperate to find a way out when Brad yelled, “There’s a door!”

Brad and Bill grabbed their cameras as the four crossed the room to the door. The door didn’t have a hinge, so the four tried to make it slide back. The door was metal and hot to the touch, but each man grabbed a part of the door and pushed. It wouldn’t budge.

David began to look around the room as the other three continued to try to open the door. David then yelled, “There’s another circle stair case! Come on!”

The three men gave up trying to move the door and followed David up the other circle stair case. They crossed another short catwalk to a door. The four burst open the door and dropped to the floor of a small, white room. There were no doors, just a row of windows that led to a fire escape.

“Out now!” ordered Larry.

They gave a short attempt at opening the windows when another ball of fire filled the room behind them. Bill then swung his camera at the

window. On the third hit, the window and metal frame gave way and the window broke open. Each of the men went out the window and on to the fire escape. They lowered a ladder. Larry was the first one down, then David. As soon as Brad put his weight on the ladder, it started to creak and buckle.

“Move it!” shouted Larry.

Brad hurried down the ladder, but as soon as Bill put his weight on it, the ladder came crashing down. Brad fell a few feet, he started to feel lucky until the metal ladder landed on his legs, pinning him to the ground. Bill fell a long way and landed awkwardly. He remained motionless on the ground.

Larry began to think more clearly. He ran to the crew’s van and picked up his cell phone and a wrench. He called 9-1-1 as he walked down the side of the building with the wrench.

“Hello? Police? We have an emergency!” yelled Larry. After walking twenty feet down the side of the building, Larry stopped. He took the wrench, found the pipe that supplied gas to the building and turned it off.

David helped Brad push the metal ladder off of his legs. Brad and David then tended to Bill. Bill was breathing, but he was unconscious.

Brad said to David, “Did you hear those screams? Who was screaming?”

David then said, “The damned. They were screaming. This place IS hell on earth.”

Chapter 9

The Stinger

The screen went black. Danny ran up to the television and placed a hand on each side. He was in a panic, thinking the television had shut off. He was getting ready to shake the TV violently, when the screen lit up with commercials. Danny was confused at first. David Landers said there wasn't going to be any commercial interruption, but then Danny remembered this was a rerun of Thursday's show.

Danny settled himself back on the couch. The last twenty minutes of this episode were instantly at the top of Danny's greatest moments of television. He had never seen someone get possessed before. The last five minutes of the show were approaching and Danny was awaiting a big reveal that usually happened at the end each show. He continued to stare at the television screen, not even taking the time to blink.

The screen faded in again. David Landers was back in the studio. He calmly said, “The fate of this evil building rests with one man. He is the only man who dares to live on the grounds of Wallace Towers. He is the sole owner of the property and the only man who controls the destiny of this terrible, horrific place.”

The screen again switched to David Landers running along the side of the Wallace Towers sometime during the day. He and his camera crew ran up to an old, slouching man on the street corner.

In a low, scratchy voice, the old man said, “What do you want?” A moment later, Danny jumped to his feet in shock.

David Landers said, “My name is David Landers, from the show *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*.”

“Go away!” the old man said.

“Don’t you think the towers should be destroyed?!” yelled David Landers.

The elderly man quickened his pace to his house as he said, “It’s just a building. Nothing

would be wrong with a building if you people would just let it alone!”

“What about the bodies and souls of the sixty who lay in its bowels?!”

“That’s just a myth.”

“Haven’t you seen ghosts? Have they come after you?”

“That’s it! Go away,” yelled the old man. He disappeared down a narrow hallway that cut straight into the massive structure.

“Mom! Mom! Mom!” Danny cried.

Mrs. Smith was startled and instantly in a panic by the shouts coming from upstairs. She ran as quickly as she could. From the uproar, she had prepared herself for the worst. She climbed up the stairs and thought to herself, “Is Danny hurt? Do we need to go to the hospital?”

Mrs. Smith opened the door to the activity room and saw Danny jumping up and down on the couch. She said frantically, “What is it Danny?”

Danny shouted, “It’s Mr. Curstmeyer!”

A Stunning piano performance

Danny's mouth was stuffed full of chicken, rice, and broccoli. Still chewing, he attempted to speak. "Ill Oo el ee ow?"

"Don't talk with your mouth full, Danny," replied Mrs. Smith.

Danny continued to chew for another two minutes. Mrs. Smith had barely started to eat her dinner when Danny repeated what he said. "Will you tell me now?"

"I said I'll tell you after WE finish dinner. You're almost done, but I'm not."

Mrs. Smith greatly enjoyed Sunday nights. The Sunday night dinner had always been reserved for the two of them to eat and talk. There was no television, no phones, and no Ipods during the meal. It was either talking to each other or complete silence.

Danny could eat no more. His plate was already empty and he made no attempt at getting more food. Mrs. Smith however cut up her chicken and pushed around her broccoli before putting some salt and pepper on them. She then used her fork to grab a little rice with a little broccoli and topped it off with a piece of chicken. She ate the forkful trio of food and took a moment to enjoy its deliciousness.

Danny knew his mom was stalling, but he also knew she had the upper hand tonight. Mrs. Smith felt she wouldn't have known her son at all without these dinners. She was going to take her time.

Mrs. Smith asked, "So, what are you going to do with the rest of your week off?"

"I hadn't thought past *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* marathon."

"Well, there are plenty of chores for you to do. I also assume that you have homework to do over the next week?"

Danny unenthusiastically nodded. He didn't like to think about school, especially when he's on break.

Mrs. Smith continued, “Well, I’ll be away at work on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, but Jack’s mom will be home. You’ll be over there for most of those days.”

Mrs. Smith wanted to find out as much detail about Danny’s life as she could. She constantly thought of questions she could ask Danny on Sunday nights. She even placed a notepad on the dresser of her bedroom so she could jot down things to ask Danny on Sunday night. Danny, on the other hand, wasn’t too enthusiastic with Sunday night conversations.

“So, what homework do you have?” Mrs. Smith asked.

“Mr. Gilbert gave us three pages of Math homework.”

“Should you do that tonight?”

“Can I do it with Jack tomorrow?” Danny asked.

“That sounds fine.”

Mrs. Smith ate a few more bites of food. She was usually the instigator of conversation on Sunday nights. There would only be silence if she

didn't ask Danny questions. Sometimes Danny's answers were even shorter than her questions.

"How are your friends?" Mrs. Smith asked.

"They're fine," Danny replied quickly.

"Is Andrew okay after his fall last week?"

Danny at first didn't know what his mom was talking about, but then remember that Andrew had come over to his house last Wednesday and skinned his knee. "He's fine."

"Are there any sports coming up?"

"No."

"Nothing at all?" Mrs. Smith asked.

"Not until after break."

"Fall break or winter break?"

"Winter."

Mrs. Smith had stopped eating and was playing with her food. She wasn't even that hungry. She was only attempting to continue the dinner for as long as possible. She knew she could have Danny's attention for the remainder of the night, but she wasn't ready to talk about Mr.

Curstmeyer and the Wallace Towers, not yet at least.

In between her last few bites, Mrs. Smith asked, “You could still have a piano lesson on Thursday if you would like. I’m sure Mr. Curstmeyer wouldn’t mind.”

Danny thought about this for a long time. Mr. Curstmeyer would have the greatest insight to his favorite television show, but he would have to play scales and endure a half hour of musical agony.

Danny didn’t answer. Instead, he became tired of his mom taking advantage of the situation by not finishing her food. He said, “Would you just tell me what Mr. Curstmeyer has to do with Wallace Towers?”

Mrs. Smith knew her son was at the breaking point of needing to know. She ate two more bites, wiped her hands on her napkin, and said, “Okay. Clear the table and put the dishes in the sink. I need to go up to the attic.”

Danny rarely cleaned up on Sunday nights, but he did as he was told. He knew his mom was prolonging this unusual circumstance of power

over him, but he hoped the information she will give him tonight would pay off. He could have the inside information that everyone at school would want to know.

Danny had cleared the table in a few minutes and entered the living room. Mrs. Smith returned from upstairs. She was carrying an old box filled with pictures, medals, and old newspapers. She put the box on the piano bench and said, "Come and have a seat, Danny."

Danny sat on the couch opposite the piano. Mrs. Smith handed him a newspaper clipping with the headline *Stunning Performance Wows Delighted Crowd*. There was a picture of a young man in a tuxedo bowing to a crowd in front of a grand piano.

"Is that Mr. Curstmeyer?" Danny asked.

"Yes."

For a moment, Danny couldn't believe the picture was of Mr. Curstmeyer. He looked so young. His bright smile beamed through the black and white newspaper clipping. His hair was not wild and spastic. It was dark and long enough that it dropped down to his shoulders. Danny assumed

Mr. Curstmeyer was as young as he was at one point in time, but he had no idea Mr. Curstmeyer would have his picture in the newspaper by the time he was Danny's age.

“So, he can play the piano?”

“Of course,” she quickly replied. “Hasn't he answered every question you have about music?”

“But he never plays the piano.”

“He played enough to win all of these medals,” Mrs. Smith said pointing to the box.

Danny stood up from the couch and looked into the box. Mrs. Smith continued saying, “Mr. Curstmeyer played three concerts every year here in Davenport. They were always standing room only. Your father and I attended every concert. We were the co-presidents of his fan club.”

The box was filled with medals, trophies, certificates, and newspaper clippings. The majority of them said “First Prize” with a few saying “Second Prize.” Danny began to count them, but stopped counting after he reached thirty.

Mrs. Smith picked up a large, old piece of paper and handed it to Danny. He looked at it closely.

Danny didn't understand most of it, but there were a lot of legal words that didn't make sense to him. He looked at the top of the paper and asked, "What does deed mean?"

Mrs. Smith said, "A deed is a piece of paper that gives ownership of property to someone."

"So, Mr. Curstmeyer owns something at 1313 West Twenty Third Avenue?"

"He owns the Wallace Towers," Mrs. Smith said.

"That's the address of the Wallace Towers!"

Danny's gut reaction was to drop the piece of paper. The deed could have been just as haunted as the Wallace Towers, but Danny held it fast. He couldn't believe he was holding the piece of paper that says Mr. Curstmeyer owns the Wallace Towers.

Danny asked, "Can I take it to school?"

“No, Danny,” Mrs. Smith quickly said. “This is a very important document. That’s why Mr. Curstmeyer gave it to me, for safe keeping.”

Danny continued to stare at the piece of paper until Mrs. Smith reached for the deed. Danny willingly gave it back to her. Danny then asked, “Did Mr. Curstmeyer buy the Wallace Towers?”

“No,” Mrs. Smith said. “All of the businesses moved out and the building stood empty for a few months. Charles Wallace then gave Mr. Curstmeyer the deed before the bank tried to repossess it. Charles Wallace then disappeared. Mr. Curstmeyer still owns the towers and the house on the property.”

Danny didn’t remember ever seeing a house in *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*. He asked, “There’s a house on the property?”

“Yes,” Mrs. Smith said. She didn’t like talking about the Wallace Towers, but felt compelled because she had started the topic. She continued, “It is the house the Wallace’s built for the cemetery keeper. The cemetery keeper would have maintained the cemetery. Charles Wallace didn’t destroy the house when he built the towers.

It's back there; you just can't see it from the street."

Danny couldn't wait to tell everyone at school. Mrs. Smith could see the excitement on his face.

Danny asked, "Has Mr. Curstmeyer seen ghosts at his house?"

Mrs. Smith did have a secret agenda tonight. She still wanted Danny to play the piano. Since Danny's interest had peaked, she replied, "Perhaps you should ask him that."

Danny quickly said, "I'm done playing the piano."

"Suit yourself," Mrs. Smith attempted to say casually.

Danny said, "If he comes here to give me lessons, he must live close by. Then the Wallace Towers must be here too!"

Mrs. Smith said, "But, I guess there's no more to say. You are no longer taking lessons. I guess this is where the story ends."

Mrs. Smith quickly packed up the box and headed back towards the attic. She hoped in a few days, Danny would want to hear more information so much that he would again play the piano. However, she was nervous that she had inadvertently given Danny too much information. Danny could never walk to Wallace Towers, but they were close by.

Chapter 11

1313 West Twenty Third Avenue

Danny heard something then opened his eyes. The first thing he saw was his digital alarm clock next to the bed. It was 5:03am. He attempted to mumble a response, but only gibberish came out of his mouth. He then realized his mom was sitting on his bed next to him.

Mrs. Smith said, "I'm leaving for work."

"Mmm...uhmm," Danny replied.

Mrs. Smith took this as enough of an acknowledgement for so early in the morning. She then said, "You can sleep in, but as soon as you're up, brush your teeth, get dressed, then head over to Mrs. Campbell's house."

Mrs. Smith felt lucky and blessed as she kissed her half conscious son on the forehead. She wished whenever her son was at home, she could be there with him, but she had to work. She worked three ten hour shifts per week. Her

coworkers worked forty hours a week, but to make up for the difference, she was allowed to work on her computer at home. On the days she did work at her office, she would leave as early as possible so she could get back home.

The saving grace for Mrs. Smith and Danny was their next door neighbors, the Campbell's, especially Jack and his mom. Without Mrs. Campbell watching Danny during the days when she had to work, she wouldn't have been able to keep her job. Without her full time job, Mrs. Smith and Danny wouldn't have been able to stay in the home that Danny grew up in.

Each time Mrs. Smith left for work, she reminded him of this. "Remember," Mrs. Smith said, "be nice to Mrs. Campbell. Do everything she tells you to do! If I couldn't work, who knows where we would be."

"Yes, mom," replied Danny. He had always taken these reminders seriously. If he didn't, his mom would have continued to drill him on behaving for Mrs. Campbell.

Mrs. Smith rose from Danny's bed and said, "See you by 5pm tonight, Okay?"

Danny said, “Okay.” He quickly fell asleep, even before Mrs. Smith closed his bedroom door.

The sun soon came up into the sky and light began to fill Danny’s room. Danny was quickly up and full of energy. He had only one thing on his mind. He needed to find the Wallace Towers.

Danny was worried he had forgotten the address. He decided not to write it down last night because he was afraid that his mom would find it. She would have tried to stop him from finding the towers. He quickly found a piece of paper and wrote down the address as he remembered it, “1313 Twenty Third Avenue.”

Still in his pajamas, Danny went out of his room and into the hallway. He looked up and saw the panel that led to the attic in the ceiling. He wanted to find the deed to the Wallace Towers again so he could show Jack, but something was different. There usually was a string that hung down from the panel. When tugged on the string, a staircase would lower down, but the string wasn’t there. He realized his mom must have taken the string down after she returned the box last night.

The house phone rang. Danny expected his mom to call him to make sure he had gone over to Jack's house, but she usually didn't call this early.

Danny went into the activity room and quickly picked up the phone.

"Hi mom!" Danny said.

"You're up! Did you sleep well?"

"Yes. I just got up."

"Okay. I'll give you another ten minutes to brush your teeth and get changed," Danny's mom said with authority. "I'll call you over at Jack's house."

Danny gave up on getting to the attic. Even with the tallest chair in the house, he couldn't reach the panel in the ceiling. He would have to rely on his memory.

"Alright, mom," he said.

"Bye," Mrs. Smith said. She quickly hung up the phone.

Danny did as he was told. If he couldn't get to the attic, there was no reason to stay at his house anymore. Danny couldn't look up the Wallace

Towers on the internet on his own computer. Mrs. Smith kept a close watch on everything Danny did online. If Danny looked up the address he saw on the deed, his mom would know about it by the end of the day.

Jack's mom, Mrs. Campbell, wasn't as computer savvy as Mrs. Smith. Since Mrs. Campbell didn't know about the "internet history" (the record of everything you look up and everywhere you go on the internet), it would be far less likely for her to find out. The address Danny saw on the deed last night, 1313 Twenty Third Avenue, also wouldn't mean that much to Mrs. Campbell.

Danny put on his clothes, brushed his teeth, and headed over to Jack's house. He locked his front door and walked twenty feet to Jack's front door. It was already open. Danny headed straight for the kitchen.

Jack was up and on a computer.

"Jack! Go to Mapquest!" Danny said excitedly.

"Good morning Danny!" Mrs. Campbell said. "What are you looking for?"

Danny hadn't seen Mrs. Campbell behind the kitchen counters. She was the toughest parent to trick. She was trusting of Jack and Danny, but was very aware of the trouble boys of that age can get themselves into. She was a teacher for eight years then took a break from teaching once Jack was born. Jack's sister, Ava, was born two years after Jack. Mrs. Campbell never returned to teaching. Jack and Ava were enough for her to handle.

To Danny, Mrs. Campbell looked like a school teacher. She had a presence about her, like a police officer in a dress. Danny was worried the simple request for Jack to go to Mapquest might have already ruined all of his plans for today.

By quite a stroke of luck, Jack said quickly, "No need. I know how to get to the movie theatre."

"What are you going to see?" Mrs. Campbell asked.

"*Heads Up*," Jack said.

Jack had wanted to see the new blockbuster movie *Heads Up*, but something in Danny's voice alerted him to a possible change in plans. Jack

knew about Mrs. Smith's ability to monitor Danny's computer use, but they could look up almost anything on his computer. Mrs. Campbell began to clean the refrigerator, so Jack casually moved out of the chair in front of the computer.

Danny sat down and took control of the keyboard and mouse. He immediately switched the browser to Mapquest then typed in 1313 Twenty Third Avenue, Davenport, PA. Danny looked over at Jack and saw that he had no idea what was going on and why this address was so special. Danny then found an open space on the computer screen and typed, "Wallace Towers."

Jack's eyes widened. Danny and Jack had tried to find the location of the Wallace Towers many times before, but there too much information on the internet. There were several dozen places around the world called the Wallace Towers, but none of them gave any information about being the location where *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* was filmed. Jack had dozens of questions for Danny, but he wasn't going to ask any of them while his mom was still in the room.

Danny submitted the address and part of a map of Davenport came on the screen. It wasn't a

part of town Danny or Jack was familiar with, but they recognized some of the names of the streets. It was close to downtown Davenport, which had always been known as a ghost town. There were businesses that operated during the day in downtown Davenport, but at night, the entire area shut down. People avoided downtown Davenport at night.

Danny zoomed in on the arrow pin pointing the address of the Wallace Towers. Danny and Jack saw a massive open space with nothing around it. It gave no hint that this was the Wallace Towers.

Jack then said, “Wait a second.” He grabbed the mouse and switched the map to Google Earth. Danny and Jack could see a bird’s eye view of all the homes and streets nearby, but the entire area of the Wallace Towers was blurred and covered with big white letters that said, “Unavailable.”

Danny and Jack were excited, but disappointed at the same time. They both wanted to find this place, but they both needed more evidence that this was the real Wallace Towers before they would try to get there. If it wasn’t the

Wallace Towers from their favorite television show, then it wasn't worth the risk of getting into trouble.

Danny had another idea. He knew Mr. Curstmeyer lived at the address right next to the Wallace Towers, so he switched to Google and typed "Mr. Kurt Curstmeyer in Davenport, Pennsylvania." The address that came back was 1315 West Twenty Third Avenue.

Danny flipped back to the map on Mapquest and looked at Jack. Jack was trying to put together the pieces. Mrs. Campbell was still in the room, so Jack couldn't ask any questions and Danny couldn't verbally give him any answers, so Danny found another box he could type into.

Danny typed, "This is where Wallace Towers is! Curstmeyer lives right next to it!"

Jack stared at the screen astounded. He couldn't believe the Wallace Towers were in Davenport. Without blinking or breaking his stare from the screen, he nudged Danny off the chair. He wanted to track down the place where *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* was filmed as much as Danny, so he clicked on "Directions" and entered his own address. A map with a purple line then

came on the screen. It was a route to get from his house to the Wallace Towers. There were only fourteen miles from where they stood to the haunted place that had intrigued them for the past year and a half. He quickly gave up the idea of seeing a movie today, but he knew the movie would be a great cover story for their adventure.

Jack said, “It would take us about an hour to get there.”

“To get where?” Mrs. Campbell asked.

Jack momentarily forgot his mom was still in the room, but having dealt with an investigative, overbearing mother all of his life, he was quick on his feet.

Jack said, “It would take us an hour to walk to the movie theatre. It would be better if we took our bikes.”

Mrs. Campbell didn’t say anything. They assumed the cover story of seeing a movie was working.

“So, mom,” Jack said, “can we go see *Heads Up?*”

Mrs. Campbell's cautious sense of her young teenage son immediately clicked in. She asked, "Well, what is *Heads Up*?"

"A movie." Jack replied.

"Yes, I have that information already. What is it about?"

"About some kids who play baseball," Jack said. "It's showing at 11:30."

"Which theatre?"

"Thunderbird Megaplex."

Mrs. Campbell's teacher instinct stuck with her since her teaching days. It was now at a high alert. She asked, "Why don't you see it at Crescent Place?"

The Thunderbird Mall and Megaplex was about three miles east of Jack's house. Crescent Place was only a mile and a half, but it was in the opposite direction of the Wallace Towers.

Without even blinking, Jack said, "We wanted to stop at the arcade and food court."

"Should I drop you off?" Mrs. Campbell asked.

Danny, in as sweet a voice as he could create, said, “We don’t want to bother you, Mrs. Campbell.”

Danny’s statement made Jack panic. That type of statement was sure to make his mom suspicious. Jack quickly said, “We’ll also stop by the park on the way back to hang out with Mike and Andrew. Besides, it’s nice out.”

Danny and Jack suddenly were in an even greater panic. Danny thought it was actually quite cloudy and dreary outside and Jack had not looked out the window since he woke up. Luck however was still on Jack and Danny’s side. There was a break in the clouds just as Jack said it was nice out. There was even a momentary ray of sunshine that dropped down into the Campbell’s kitchen window.

The nice sunlight that shined down in the kitchen reassured Mrs. Campbell that the two boys would be fine in their trip to the Thunderbird Mall and Megaplex.

“Alright,” she said. “Let me know when you boys are going to head out to the movie theatre.”

Chapter 12

Breaking the Rules

Danny and Jack never really looked at how their bikes worked until they were getting ready to make the trip to the Wallace Towers.

“Is the chain supposed to go around that wheel?” Danny asked.

Jack replied, “Yes. I think if it falls off, you just have to put it on again.”

Neither of them had ridden their bikes even half as far as the ride to the Wallace Towers. They knew if either bike broke on the trip, they would get into trouble.

Jack pedaled around the driveway. “I think we’re ready,” he said. “Let’s go tell my mom.”

Danny and Jack walked in the house but didn’t find Mrs. Campbell in the kitchen. Jack then walked up to the doorway that led to the

basement and heard his mom doing the laundry downstairs.

Jack yelled, “Mom, we’re ready to go!”

Mrs. Campbell soon climbed up the stairs and appeared in front of them. Danny and Jack stepped out of the way as Mrs. Campbell entered the kitchen and found her purse. As she reached for her wallet, she said, “Thunderbird Mall is on Thunderbird Rd., right?”

“Yes,” Jack and Danny said at the same time.

“Which road is that again?” asked Mrs. Campbell.

“Thunderbird Road,” Jack and Danny again said at the same time.

Mrs. Campbell was acting like a teacher again, but she felt it was necessary that Jack and Danny heard a stern, lecturing voice before they left. For extra emphasis, she took plenty of time to repeat herself.

“What is so special about Thunderbird Road?” Mrs. Campbell asked.

Jack replied, "I'm not allowed to cross it under any circumstances."

"Under any circumstances," repeated Mrs. Campbell. She then continued, "So, Thunderbird Road is the street you are not allowed to cross."

"Yes," Jack replied obediently.

"Okay," Mrs. Campbell said as she pulled out twenty dollars from her purse. "Here is a twenty. Remember, you only have forty dollars to spend on activities during your entire Fall break."

"Thanks mom!" said Jack.

"Thanks Mrs. Campbell!" said Danny.

Jack and Danny made a very quick exit. In a few seconds, they were out the front door and in the driveway getting on their bikes.

Mrs. Campbell continued her lecture as they started to leave. She said, "Be very careful! Always look both ways before you cross the street! If you get into any trouble or if anything happens, use Danny's cell phone to call me right away!"

Danny and Jack had their helmets on and rode their bikes out of the driveway. Mrs. Campbell was on the front porch to see them off.

Jack said, “We’ll be careful, mom.”

Mrs. Campbell then said, “No matter what, be home by five! Your dad will be home by then.”

Danny and Jack took off down the road, pedaling fast. They couldn’t believe they tricked Mrs. Campbell. They couldn’t believe they were on their way to the Wallace Towers.

After five minutes of burning off adrenaline, they began to slow down.

“This is going to be awesome!” Danny yelled in anticipation.

“I know. It’s going to be so cool!” replied Jack.

There were several large hills Danny and Jack had to climb just to get to the Megaplex on Thunderbird Road. The first hill wasn’t very big, so they remained on their bikes and muscled their way up to the top. They enjoyed coasting down the other side until they reached a second hill.

This one was so tall that they climbed off their bikes and walked.

“We’ll make it right?” Danny asked breathing heavily.

“Yep, we’ll be fine.” Jack said confidently. “We have six hours.”

After coasting down the second hill, their trip to Wallace Towers quickly turned into an endurance workout. They stopped talking to each other to conserve their energy.

They stopped at the intersection just beyond the shops and restaurants of the Thunderbird Mall and Megaplex. They climbed off their bikes, and found a bench to sit on.

“What time is it?” Danny asked.

“It’s 11:15.” Jack replied.

“It took us thirty minutes to get here. How far is that?”

“It’s about three miles.”

Jack was showing his athleticism. The trip so far was nothing for him. Danny however was suddenly a bit worried. He was already tired.

Danny said, “We have eleven more miles to go, right?”

Jack replied, “Yes.”

“So, if it takes us thirty minutes to ride three miles, we should get there in less than two more hours.”

“We better get going then,” Jack said spiritedly. He climbed back on his bike. After taking another second to breathe, Danny also stood up and climbed on his bike.

Danny and Jack looked at the intersection of Thunderbird Road and Cave Creek Road. This was the farthest Mrs. Campbell would ever let them venture without parental supervision. With their next steps, they would be breaking the rules. If Mrs. Campbell knew they crossed Thunderbird Road, Jack and Danny would get the home form of detention, they would be severely grounded. The light at the intersection changed to green, the walk sign was on, and they continued to the Wallace Towers.

Chapter 13

The Long Bike Ride

The side walk had ended and Jack and Danny became very nervous. They could have turned back and found an alternate route, but that could have taken hours and they didn't have that kind of time.

“We can't stay on this road,” Danny said uneasily.

Jack and Danny were riding their bikes on the side of a road that didn't have any sidewalks. Cars zoomed by on their left. A solid wall of trees was on their right. Only a couple feet separated them from a collision with a tree or an accident with a truck. The possibility of an accident may have terrified Danny, but the slight thrill of danger made Jack that much more determined to get there.

Jack said, “We'll be fine. Just stay as far to the side as possible.”

Danny saw another hill coming up and said, “If there isn’t a sidewalk by the time we get over that next hill, we have to turn back.”

A large, gray semi truck honked and sped quickly by the two boys. In the rush of wind from the massive truck, Jack suddenly became aware of the danger of traveling down this road and was much more receptive to turning back.

“Alright,” Jack said. “If there isn’t a sidewalk on the other side, we’ll turn back. We could probably still catch a movie.”

Danny and Jack worked their way up the hill. It was a small hill, so they stayed on their bikes and again muscled their way up to the top. They both took a sigh of relief when they saw civilization again on the other side, including a sidewalk. They coasted down the hill and immediately pulled on to the sidewalk to get as far away from traffic as they could. They also looked to their right and appreciated the large, gray parking lot instead of trees.

Jack saw a gas station and said, “Let’s pull in there.”

Jack pulled in and jumped off his bike. Danny was close behind him and needed the break. He pulled in and immediately sat down on the curb.

“I’m going to go get a slushy,” Jack said. “Do you want one?”

“Yes!” Danny said. He was desperate for a cold refreshment.

Jack disappeared into the store as Danny looked around from the curb. Danny and his mom had never traveled through this part of town before. They had never gone to downtown Davenport. There had never been any reason to go beyond the Thunderbird Mall.

Danny then looked up beyond the next hill. He could see something in the distance. He stood up as Jack came out of the store.

“So how big do you think it will be?” Jack asked.

“Look!” Danny said, pointing just above the next hill.

Jack stopped and looked over the next hill. He could see a small tower reaching just above the trees. “Is that...” Jack began to ask.

“Yeah. That’s where Margaret Dean jumped to her death in 1982,” Danny said.

The small tower on top of tower D, the very top of the Wallace Towers, was still far into the distance, but since it was within their sights, their energy returned. They wanted to get going as fast as possible.

“Here!” Jack said as he threw the slushy into Danny’s hands.

Danny and Jack both took a deep breath and took a huge gulp of their slushy. It quenched their thirst and cooled them off. They felt so good, they took another huge gulp of slushy.

“Ow!” Jack yelled.

“Brain Freeze!” Danny yelled back.

Jack and Danny shook off the frost from their brains before continuing to chug their slushies. They finished them quickly.

“Let’s go!” said Jack as he threw away his cup and straw and began to ride his bike. Danny momentarily stopped him though.

“Wait,” Danny said. “I need to avoid Mr. Curstmeyer’s house. He might call my mom and then we would be in trouble.”

“Alright,” Jack said.

Danny threw away his slushy cup as Jack began to pedal away. Just beyond the gas station, they began to coast down a steady downhill slope.

“You don’t think the camera crew will be there, do you?” Jack asked.

“I don’t know. They must still be filming this season.”

“If we are caught on camera, we could be on the show!”

“We could be the most popular kids in school,” Danny said enthusiastically. “But, we would also get into trouble.”

“It would be worth it,” Jack replied.

They wanted to keep their sights on the Wallace Towers, but their bikes quickly picked up

speed on the downhill slope. They began to go so fast that they completely ignored the sight of the towers in the sky and remained concentrated on riding their bikes. They continued to coast downhill for three miles. Danny was nervous about how fast they were going while Jack loved every second of it. Danny did at least appreciate that the ride was a lot easier.

The downhill slope evened out momentarily and they began to slow down. Danny looked up at the small portion of the Wallace Towers in the sky. He couldn't help his jaw from lowering from the sight. His mouth was wide open in awe of the giant complex. When they began to coast down another hill, he quickly closed his mouth suddenly and spit.

“Auugggh!” Danny yelled.

“What is it?” Jack asked.

“A bug just flew in my mouth.”

The easy, downhill ride stopped as they reached the outskirts of the city of Davenport. The city was flat and crowded with houses, shops, restaurants, and stoplights. The massive structure

of the Wallace Towers dominated the sky. It loomed over everything.

Danny and Jack continued to ride to the Wallace Towers. The closer they went, the less people they saw on the street. The shape and quality of the buildings around them deteriorated very quickly. They saw more and more cars on the side of the street with rust, broken glass, and flat tires.

At 2pm, Danny and Jack found themselves looking at the sign that once said “Future site of Wallace Towers: Gateway to Financial Immortality.”

Someone had defaced the painted sign. Jack read it out loud.

“Future site of Wallace Terrors. Gateway to Hell.”

The Wallace Towers

The Wallace Towers stood quietly before Jack and Danny. The brick that covered the majority of the building was a rusty yellow color. They couldn't see through the small squares of glass in the large factory windows. Many of the small windows were dirty, cracked, or shattered. Danny and Jack immediately knew why *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* mostly filmed the outside of the building at night. It wasn't very nice to look at.

The towers looked like many other rundown buildings Jack and Danny saw on their long bike ride. The only difference was the Wallace Tower's massive size. The first four floors were a solid building that took up almost every inch of space on the city block. After the fourth floor, the building split apart into four separate towers. Each tower varied in size. The smallest tower was thirteen stories tall. The largest was over fifty.

Jack and Danny looked at the towers for five minutes. When their necks began to feel soar from looking up, they took a moment to look at the street around them. Twenty Third Avenue was deserted. On the opposite side of the street, there were only empty lots and the bulldozed remains of a few old houses. A few dark and decrepit trees remained. The grass had died a long time ago leaving only dirt and dead weeds. Beyond the empty lots, they saw the back yards of the houses on the next street.

“Who is that?” Jack asked.

An old woman in a backyard rose from an old, metal, rusty chair to leer at Jack and Danny. She was very aware of kids who found out about the Wallace Towers. Likewise, Jack and Danny were very aware of this woman who gave them a cautious look.

“Let’s go this way,” Danny said. Truthfully, he wanted to go around the building to get away from the old woman.

They hopped on their bikes and headed to the first corner. The lot the Wallace Towers stood on was so large, it took Jack and Danny a few

minutes to make it around the first turn and out of the woman's sight.

Around the corner, Danny and Jack came to the main entrance of the Wallace Towers. There were a few more trees and some brush next to a small, curved and paved driveway that went up to the main doors. Jack and Danny made their first discovery in the dirt next to the driveway.

“There's the hole from the first episode!” yelled Danny.

Danny and Jack pulled their bikes up to the hole. They slowly inched their way forward so they could see the bottom. There was a lot of litter in the hole.

Danny said, “You really could fit a casket in there, couldn't you...”

“That's where they shot the second episode!” yelled Jack. He pointed just beyond the hole, next to the building.

Jack dropped his bike in the dirt and ran up to a large crevice between the sidewalk and the huge building. He kneeled down next to the

opening. Danny caught up to him quickly and peered down into the narrow space.

“Remember what David Landers and that guy said?” asked Jack.

Danny remembered it very well. He replayed it in his mind.

Dr. Mickelson had said, “The Wallace Towers are a marvel of modern architecture. Charles Wallace was determined to make history with the construction of these towers, so he laid a foundation entirely of steel.”

David Landers, pointing down into the crevice, then said, “But mixed into this foundation of steel are the remains of those who were accidentally buried here. Now they will forever remain here as residents of the Wallace Towers.”

Dr. Mickelson then said, “The massive amount of steel underneath the Wallace Towers is virtually unbreakable. Even if the Wallace Towers were completely destroyed, the steel foundation would remain there. Nothing can cut through it, nothing could lift it. It will remain there forever.”

Jack grabbed a large rock and dropped it down into the crevice. The rock hit the steel foundation. Suddenly, a very loud tone rang through the crevice and through part of the building. The building quivered and shook. After a few seconds, the building rested again and stood silently.

“Cool!” Jack yelled.

Danny said, “That’s weird. If you dropped a rock on the basement of my house, it wouldn’t ring like that.”

“It’s made of steel, like cymbals or triangles or something.”

Jack found an even bigger rock. Using two hands, he grabbed it and dropped it into the crevice on the steel foundation below. The loud tone again rang through the entire side of the building.

“Look out!” Jack said.

Dust and parts of brick began to fall. A window above them cracked. Danny and Jack took five huge steps back as the loud tone continued to shake the building for over ten

seconds. They took a sigh of relief when the building finally stopped trembling.

Danny and Jack looked at each other nervously. “We wouldn’t be waking anything up by doing that would we?” Danny asked.

Jack shrugged it off and said, “You’re as bad as Andrew.” He continued to walk down the side of the building. Danny again approached the crevice when Jack again yelled, “Over here!”

Jack was in front of a narrow opening. Danny quickly caught up to him as Jack continued, “Look! Isn’t this that hallway that old guy walked down in the season premiere.”

Danny quickly ducked back and said, “I can’t be seen by Mr. Curstmeyer.”

“That creepy piano teacher?” Jack replied. “Who cares about Creepy Curstmoe or whatever his name is.”

“He could call my mom,” said Danny. “Then we would both be in trouble.”

“Okay,” said Jack. “Let’s keep going around the next turn.”

Both Jack and Danny turned around and picked up their bikes. They quickly rode to the next corner. They kept their eyes on the giant building, trying to find connections between what they've seen on *the Ghosts of Wallace Towers* and what they could see with their own eyes.

In the quick sprint they took to round the next corner, fatigue began to set in. Danny could barely feel his legs. Even Jack was getting tired of riding his bike. Once they made it around the corner and out of sight from anyone who could walk out of the narrow hallway, they dropped their bikes and began to walk again.

Jack suddenly pointed up. "There's the window!"

Danny recognized it right away and played the episode of *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* in his mind.

David Landers said behind a picture of this window, "What started as a prank for three college students quickly turned into a nightmare. Anna Rogers had felt strange ever since she set foot in the building. Sarah Hayes took Anna's queasiness as something serious, but Kelly Hudson laughed it off as nothing more than being scared. Anna

however would soon succumb to these feelings. They would overcome her. She became possessed by one of the ghostly inhabitants who reside at the Wallace Towers.”

Dr. Mickelson then said, “Anna Rogers first struck Sarah Hayes repeatedly with a piece of wood. After knocking her unconscious, Anna, or the ghost who possessed Anna, then went after Kelly Hudson. Ms. Rogers pushed Ms. Hudson through a window where she fell to her death.”

Jack was pointing at the ground when he yelled “The glass is still broken!”

“Danny?”

Danny suddenly felt the true feeling of fear that comes with a visit to the Wallace Towers. He recognized the voice right away. It was the voice who couldn’t say his name without it sounding like a question. It was the voice who constantly spit out demands for him to play this song and play this scale. The same voice that constantly told him he was playing it wrong.

“Danny? What are you doing so far away from your home?” Mr. Curstmeyer asked suspiciously.

Danny turned to Mr. Curstmeyer. He searched his mind for any excuse to give him. He said, “I saw you on *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* on Sunday. My mom let me come by to check out the buildings.”

Mr. Curstmeyer said skeptically, “Claire let you ride your bike fifteen miles to take a look at an old, rusty building? I highly doubt that.”

Danny continued, “She also wanted me to come for a piano lesson while I was here.”

“It’s true,” said Jack.

“Okay. Let’s give her a call,” said Mr. Curstmeyer. “I’ve been meaning to check in with her.”

Danny and Jack both had the same instinct. They wanted to ride their bikes home as fast as possible to try and beat Mr. Curstmeyer’s phone call to their parents, but after walking around for a little while, they both felt the exhaustion of the long bike ride. Jack knew they wouldn’t get down the street and out of sight before Mr. Curstmeyer made it to a telephone. Danny even thought about the long, giant hill they coasted down. He knew he couldn’t ride his bike back up that hill. He would

have to walk with his bike for at least three of the fourteen miles.

“Please don’t call my mom, Mr. Curstmeyer,” said Danny. “She’s at work and she would more than kill me if she had to leave to come pick me up.”

“Well, you boys aren’t riding your bikes back,” replied Mr. Curstmeyer. “I guess I’ll have to call the police to come pick you up...”

Jack had been imagining the look of disappointment and anger on his mom’s face since they had been caught by Mr. Curstmeyer. When Mr. Curstmeyer mentioned the police, his mental image of his mom went from upset to devastation, from anger to furious.

Jack interrupted, “Wait! We can call my mom. She’ll come pick us up.”

Danny reached into his pocket and pulled out his cell phone. He opened it up, found Mrs. Campbell’s number, and pushed talk but nothing happened. He tried it again with no luck.

“What’s wrong?” Jack asked.

Danny looked up to give Jack the bad news. “It’s Monday. My phone is blocked until 4pm.”

Mr. Curstmeyer stood patiently next to Jack and Danny, but Danny soon stopped attempting to call. Jack and Danny looked up helplessly at Mr. Curstmeyer.

“Follow me up to the house,” Mr. Curstmeyer said as he turned around.

Danny and Jack picked up their bikes and followed Mr. Curstmeyer around the corner of the huge building. Mr. Curstmeyer walked slowly, but Jack and Danny didn’t mind. They could barely walk themselves. They both leaned on their bikes to take weight off their legs.

Danny and Jack were worried about getting into trouble, but since they knew a punishment was inevitable, they enjoyed what they could of the Wallace Towers. They kept their eyes on the building, looking for more things they had seen on the show. To both Jack and Danny, the trip to the Wallace Towers was worth any punishment their parents could dish out.

Danny, Jack, and Mr. Curstmeyer approached the narrow hallway. Mr. Curstmeyer

began to walk down the dark passageway when Jack asked, “Where is your house?”

Mr. Curstmeyer said, “It’s at the center of the buildings. I can’t let you boys out of my sight. This area isn’t very safe. I’m surprised you haven’t run into trouble on the street already. You’ll have to follow me this way.”

Mr. Curstmeyer continued to walk through the hallway to his house. Danny and Jack soon followed.

The path was only five feet wide. Danny and Jack held their bikes close to fit through. The floor was dirty and the air was stale. The path quickly narrowed even more as the brick walls that surrounded them reached into the sky. Danny and Jack had a sudden realization. They were in the Wallace Towers!

The three rounded another corner and continued down an even darker path. They could no longer see the sky. Spiders and their webs hung over their heads. The only light they could see came from behind them and from the area ahead of them.

“Be careful down this hallway,” barked Mr. Curstmeyer. They walked another five feet when he again yelled, “Watch out through these newspapers and stay to the left.”

Danny and Jack did as they were told. The ground suddenly made a noise and gave way slightly. Danny suddenly realized he wasn’t walking on concrete anymore. He was walking on wood.

Mr. Curstmeyer heard the noise too and yelled, “Be careful!”

Danny and Jack slowly moved forward. They soon felt solid concrete below their feet again. The three had walked for four minutes when they finally came to Mr. Curstmeyer’s front door. There was no yard. The windows on the side of the house were boarded up. There was less than three feet of space around the house. The old, creaky door barely hung on by its hinges.

A light shined down from above. Danny and Jack looked up. The brick wall sides of the four towers rose high into the air. There was a small opening far above them between the four towers. Danny and Jack realized they were in the very center of the Wallace Towers complex.

Jack was lost in the moment when he asked, “Who would put a house here?”

Mr. Curstmeyer grumpily answered the question. “Something you boys wouldn’t know from that stupid show is this house was built before the towers. Henry Wallace built this house for him and his wife. Once they couldn’t take care of the cemetery, they would give it to a groundskeeper. Charles Wallace ruined every part of this cemetery except for this house. He once said he was going to use it as a school for the children of those who worked in the Wallace Towers. Stupid moron...”

Mr. Curstmeyer walked up a couple stairs and opened the door to his house. He said, “Wait here. What’s your mom’s phone number?”

“555-1127.”

Mr. Curstmeyer left the door open as he disappeared into the house. Jack and Danny quickly stepped forward and looked inside. The inside of the house was similar to the front door. Everything was old and covered with dust. The wood of the stair case was splintered in many places. The color of the furniture was faded and dirty. Danny reached out and felt the brick of the

house. It left a yellow dust on his fingers. He brushed it off on his pants.

Only one thing in the house looked new. Danny and Jack saw a grand piano next to the staircase. The grand piano was in beautiful, perfect condition and gleamed among the decrepit items. Little did they know it was the oldest thing in the entire Wallace Towers.

In a short time, Mr. Curstmeyer started to come back to the door. Danny and Jack quickly jumped back. They grabbed their bikes and tried to look inconspicuous.

“She’s on her way,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “Let’s head back out.”

Both Jack and Danny let out a sigh knowing their punishment was coming soon. Jack was the first to turn to head to the street. All three continued down the narrow passageway when Mr. Curstmeyer yelled at Jack.

“Stay on this side!” screamed Mr. Curstmeyer as he frantically pointed to the right. “Be careful going through the newspapers!”

Jack had already stepped from the concrete floor to the wood floor. It let out an even louder creak. He quickly moved over to the right side and the creaking stopped.

The three continued down the dark path. Some cobwebs floated down on Jack. He brushed them off nervously. A loud sound, like a brick falling, spooked Danny, but he continued to walk down the hallway.

When they rounded the corner and saw the street, Danny and Jack quickened their pace. Even though they had wanted to see the Wallace Towers, they were ready to get out.

A Chance Encounter

“What do you think we’ll get?” Jack asked.

“Chores,” replied Danny. “Lots of chores. We have the rest of the week completely open to do whatever they want us to do.”

After having their fill of fun at the Wallace Towers, Jack and Danny awaited their punishment. They sat on the street curb next to their bikes. Mr. Curstmeyer was standing behind them, not too far away, looking off into the distance.

A creak then a sharp sound of metal screeching against metal came from the narrow passageway behind them. Jack and Danny jumped and spun around. They quickly looked for what could have made that awful sound, but they only saw Mr. Curstmeyer who continued to stand, indifferent to the sudden, creepy disruption.

Jack and Danny stared at Mr. Curstmeyer. They couldn't believe that awful sound had no effect on him. Mr. Curstmeyer's demeanor however did gradually change from calm to frustration as he looked off into the distance. Jack and Danny again spun around and saw a white van driving down the street, right towards them.

The van pulled into the driveway and main entrance of the Wallace Towers. Jack and Danny could clearly see the words *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* on the side of the van. They realized they stood about thirty feet away from the crew and host of their favorite television show.

Jack and Danny didn't recognize the first person that came out of the van, but the host of the show, David Landers, quickly followed the first person. David stretched his arms up and looked around.

David Landers quickly pointed over to Mr. Curstmeyer and said, "Larry, look."

Larry snapped his fingers, looked into the van, and said, "Bill, Brad, get ready, now!"

Jack and Danny recognized Bill as he came out of the van. Bill's arm was in a sling. He still

had cuts and bruises on his face. Jack and Danny recognized Brad too from the season premiere. Brad had a huge scab on his neck.

“That’s where the guy bit his neck!” Jack said quietly to Danny.

Brad and Bill grabbed their cameras. Danny and Jack saw the little red light on their cameras flicker on. The camera men had immediately started to film when they picked them up. After a quick huddle, they began to walk towards Mr. Curstmeyer.

“Mr. Curstmeyer!?” yelled David Landers.

David Landers began to wave and walk towards Mr. Curstmeyer. He had reached a comfortable distance away from Mr. Curstmeyer and said, “Mr. Curstmeyer, have you thought more about that question I had asked you. Shouldn’t the Wallace Towers be destroyed?”

Mr. Curstmeyer remained silent and refused to acknowledge David Landers’s question. He wanted to run back down the hallway to his house, but he decided it was best to stay with Jack and Danny to be sure they were picked up safely. Jack

and Danny however couldn't hold in their excitement any longer.

Jack and Danny started to jump and scream to get David Landers's attention. "Mr. Landers! Mr. Landers!" they yelled.

David Landers saw an opportunity. He walked the few steps over to Danny and Jack. The cameras followed him as he went.

David Landers said, "Hi guys! I'm David Landers. What's your names?"

"I'm Danny Smith."

"I'm Jack Campbell."

"We love your show!" Danny said frantically.

"Great," said David Landers.

"Don't worry," Jack said. "We don't go crazy like the girls do."

"Did you see the season premiere last week?" David Landers said.

"Yeah!" shouted Jack.

"It was awesome!" continued Danny.

“Well,” David Landers continued, “since you’re both fans of the show, I’m wondering if I can ask you a few questions.”

“Anything!” shouted both Jack and Danny at the same time.

Jack and Danny were ecstatic! David Landers was going to ask them questions. They were being interviewed! Jack straightened out his clothes and Danny fixed his hair. They wanted to be on the show more than anything.

“Could you tell me about this gentleman right here?” David Landers said as he pointed to Mr. Curstmeyer.

Mr. Curstmeyer was not happy with this arrangement. He immediately said, “Don’t make a couple kids do your dirty work!”

Jack and Danny didn’t know what to do. If they told the host of their favorite television who Mr. Curstmeyer was, they could be on television, but if Mr. Curstmeyer was upset when Mrs. Campbell picked them up, their upcoming punishment could be much worse.

“Well, kids, do you know Mr. Curstmeyer?” asked David Landers again. Jack and Danny hung their heads as they decided not to say anything. David Landers asked again, “anything?”

David Landers let out a sigh as Jack and Danny remained silent. He stood up and turned around. He was about to walk back to the film crew when he stopped and again turned to Danny.

“Did you say your name is Danny Smith?”

Danny didn't see any harm in answering questions about himself. “Yes,” Danny replied.

“Is your...” David Landers began to say but stopped. He then asked, “What is your mom's name?”

“Claire.”

“That's enough!” yelled Mr. Curstmeyer.

David Landers quickly retreated back to his film crew and motioned for Bill and Brad to lower their cameras. David and Larry began talking quietly to each other.

“Thank you,” Mr. Curstmeyer said sincerely to Jack and Danny.

Danny and Jack walked closer to Mr. Curstmeyer. They didn't want to hurt Mr. Curstmeyer by talking with David Landers, but they were curious. As soon as Danny walked close enough to Mr. Curstmeyer that he could talk quietly, he asked, "why do you live here, Mr. Curstmeyer?"

"It's none of your concern."

"But your house, these towers," said Jack. "They're creepy. Lots of people have got hurt here."

"They are not creepy," Mr. Curstmeyer said softly but defiantly. "And for those people who get hurt, it's their own fault."

"Don't you have any family?" asked Danny.

Mr. Curstmeyer calmed down. Danny could see that something in his question had a great affect on Mr. Curstmeyer. He replied, "that house, this place, those things are the only family I have."

Mr. Curstmeyer saw, out of the corner of his eye, that one of the camera men had continued to record everything. Brad had caught the conversation on his camera.

“Stop, now!” yelled Mr. Curstmeyer. “Go away! This is my property!”

Brad did not lower his camera. Instead Bill also raised his camera as David walked over to Mr. Curstmeyer.

David said calmly but firmly, “Yes, Mr. Curstmeyer, you own 1313 Twenty Third Avenue, but remember, you haven’t paid your property tax for two years. The only reason this building is still standing is because we pay the bank to film here.”

Mr. Curstmeyer retaliated and said, “Then stop paying the bank and stop filming me. Then they can destroy this place and my home.”

“Mr. Curstmeyer,” David said. “No other show about ghosts and paranormal activity has ever received the ratings and publicity we have. It’s because of these towers! If we stopped, Pennsylvania National Bank would let someone else film here tomorrow.”

Mr. Curstmeyer could not argue this point. He knew this annoying host was correct. If they stopped filming, the bank would allow another group to start another show.

“There is something you can do,” continued David. “When you are ready to talk, when you agree that the best thing for this building is to no longer exist, Mayor Burland and the City of Davenport will be there to pay for everything, both the demolition of this complex and its clean up.”

Mr. Curstmeyer said softly but angrily, “Stop filming me. Film the towers for all I care, just leave me alone.”

Jack and Danny were glad to see Mrs. Campbell’s minivan pull up, even if they were going to get into trouble. They ran to their bikes and picked them up. They quickly opened the minivan door and tossed their bikes in. By the time Mrs. Campbell stepped out of the minivan and walked around to supervise Jack and Danny, they were done loading their bikes and stood motionless on the curb. They frantically looked from Mrs. Campbell to David Landers to Mr. Curstmeyer.

“What is going on?” Mrs. Campbell asked.

“Mom, this is David Landers from The Ghosts of Wallace Towers,” Jack said. “He wanted to know about Mr. Curstmeyer.”

“Who is Mr. Curstmeyer?” asked Mrs. Campbell. Mr. Curstmeyer felt he had said enough, so he only raised his hand.

Mrs. Campbell saw the uncomfortable look on Mr. Curstmeyer’s face. She said to Danny and Jack, “Well, I hope you didn’t say anything. David Landers can ask Mr. Curstmeyer himself. If Mr. Curstmeyer doesn’t want them to know, they shouldn’t know.”

“We didn’t say anything Mrs. Campbell,” said Danny.

“Good. Now get in the van,” said Mrs. Campbell. Jack and Danny did as they were told as Mrs. Campbell started to speak to Mr. Curstmeyer. “I’m sorry about the trouble these boys have caused you today.”

Mr. Curstmeyer replied, “It’s no trouble compared to these intruding jerks.”

“As for you,” Mrs. Campbell said to David Landers. “I hope you know what you are doing to impressionable young minds!”

“This building is history,” David Landers said. “We are a show about history.”

“If you want to make a history show, do something that is actually history,” Mrs. Campbell lectured. “Film Gettysburg or something important. Don’t put some irrelevant trash about ghosts and creaking noises on television and call it history.”

Mrs. Campbell returned to the van, grumbling every step of the way. Jack and Danny were sitting in their seats with their seatbelts buckled. As Mrs. Campbell drove away, Jack and Danny could see Mr. Curstmeyer walk as fast as he could back down the dark, narrow hallway.

The first three minutes of the trip back home were in silence. Jack and Danny knew they were going to be severely punished. They just didn’t know how.

After a few more minutes, Mrs. Campbell returned to her teacher mode and began to scold them. “I am very disappointed. Very disappointed! My feelings right now, disappointment. Thunderbird Road. Thunderbird Road! That is the street you are not allowed to cross without me or Mr. Campbell. Thunderbird Road.”

Mrs. Campbell's lecture continued the entire ride home. Her reprimand continued to center around three words, disappointed and Thunderbird Road.

Chapter 16

Aftermath

Jack was filthy and his clothes smelled. He was wearing the oldest, most worn pair of jeans and the most ragged shirt he had ever seen. They were covered in dirt, mud, and grime which helped block the smell, but made him feel worse.

It was Wednesday morning and Mrs. Campbell was enforcing her second day of punishment. On Tuesday, Jack had cleaned his room, the living room, and the basement. There was still light outside when Jack finished cleaning these rooms, so Mrs. Campbell sent him to the attic to sort and stack boxes and to find some old clothes for yard work. When Jack brought relatively nice clothes down from the attic, Mrs. Campbell went up herself. The shirt and jeans she found still had some baby barf and other crusty things on them from when Jack's sister, Ava, was a baby. Mrs. Campbell was nice enough to scrub

the nastiness off the clothes, but she was still mad enough to make Jack wear them for yard work.

On Wednesday, Mrs. Campbell made Jack march to the back yard where a thousand weeds waited for him. After this back-breaking work on his hands and knees, he was to move a large pile of dirt, one shovel at a time, from the back yard to a small hole on the side of the house. He was supposed to make the entire mound of dirt fit in the small hole, which he thought was impossible. Finally, he was to clean the gutters with his father when he returned from work that evening. He had helped his father clean the gutters only one other time. He remembered having to pick up slime and goo from the gutter with his bare hands.

“It was still totally worth it!” Jack said. Jack and Danny could easily talk to each other through the low wood fence that separated their back yards.

“Yep,” replied Danny.

Danny was raking the grass in his back yard. Mrs. Smith followed the same pattern as Mrs. Campbell, making Danny work inside on Tuesday and outside on Wednesday. Danny however didn't get a list of chores. Mrs. Smith was inside, working on her computer. She would give him the

next thing to do whenever he had finished each task.

In a strange way, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Campbell were almost pleased by the arrangement. Jack and Danny may have disobeyed them and put themselves in a dangerous situation, but they would have to do three straight days of cleaning the house, yard work, and other chores. The Smith and Campbell back yards were usually untidy and not well kept. They had not been cleaned up in a long time, so Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. Smith were looking forward to having beautiful and gleaming back yards again when Jack and Danny were finished with their punishment.

Danny was replaying Monday afternoon in his head over and over again.

“I can’t believe we got to meet David Landers,” Danny said. “Mom could make me do chores for two months and I still would have done it.”

Jack kneeled down next to the house and started to reach for more weeds when he groaned like an old man. Danny heard him and asked, “Do you still hurt from the bike ride?”

“Don’t you?” Jack replied. “My legs hurt so much.”

“I can’t bend my legs at all,” Danny said. “I’m glad racking grass doesn’t take any leg work.”

Danny continued to stab at the ground with the rake. He wasn’t sure why he was ordered to rake the grass. There weren’t any leaves or branches on the ground. For the most part, the rake didn’t pick up anything. Every once in a while, old dead grass would come up from the ground, but it seemed like a lot of busy work just for a little dead grass.

Jack put his left hand on the ground and reached for a weed with his right hand. His left hand suddenly sank into the mud. Water and dirt ran into his glove. “Yuck!” Jack said.

“What happened?” Danny asked.

Jack didn’t bother answering the question. Instead he asked, “Why do I have to get on my hands and knees when you can rake?”

Mrs. Smith opened the door. She looked sympathetically down on Danny in the back yard and said, “The grass looks good, Danny.”

Danny agreed. The grass did look better. “Thanks, mom,” he said.

“I’m glad I called in sick today,” Mrs. Smith said.

“Sorry you had to miss work, mom.”

“Well, your single chore tomorrow will make up for that,” Mrs. Smith said. “Trim the two trees and the row of bushes back here then quit for today. In the morning, you are cleaning the garage.”

Danny’s heart sank. Jack no longer felt cheated. Jack had only seen Danny’s garage once. It was cluttered with more junk and moldy boxes than Jack’s attic and basement. Jack would have chosen yard work any day over cleaning that.

Unexpected Discoveries

“No man’s land,” Danny thought.

Mrs. Smith woke Danny up early on Thursday morning and made him march out to the garage. He tried to open the main door of the garage, but it wouldn’t budge. He opened the side door of the garage and remained standing in front of it for quite a while. He didn’t know where to start. There was so much old stuff that hadn’t moved for years.

“Danny, what are you doing?” Mrs. Smith asked from the kitchen window.

Danny yelled back, “I don’t know what to do.”

“Use the trash bags on the ground! Go inside the garage and fill them with all the clothes you can find. I’m taking them to the Salvation Army later. Organize all the tools you can find because I’m going to take those too.”

Danny grabbed a bag and was ready to head into the garage when his mom yelled for him again. “When you’re done with that, there are more things you’ll have to do,” she said.

Mrs. Smith disappeared from the kitchen window. Danny poked his head into the garage and looked around. He saw a light bulb with a metal cord hanging down. He reached in with his hands and pulled on the chord and the garage glowed softly with a yellow hue.

Danny stepped inside. An old work bench was next to the door. Old, dirty tools were spread everywhere. He didn’t want to start with the tools. They were heavy and some of them were sharp. A small but old and rusty car filled the majority of the garage. Danny had never seen it move or even start. He bypassed the work bench and walked around the car to the back of the garage.

The back wall was completely covered by stacks of old boxes. Since most of them were filled with clothes, they were easy to take down. Danny however noticed that they were covered in dust and dirt. He carefully put the top row of boxes gently down on the ground so he wouldn’t get a face full of dust or a shower of dirt.

There were lots of baby clothes in the first three boxes. The first garbage bag was filled with Danny's old baby clothes alone. Danny didn't remember them at all. He would have been less than three years old when he would have worn them. He did notice however that a lot of the baby clothes had musical notes and instruments on them.

Danny dragged the first bag out of the garage and placed it in the driveway. He then grabbed another bag and headed into the garage. Boxes of clothes continued to come down from the wall. He found two boxes of his mother's dresses, shirts, and pants. He also found a box of his mom's underwear and other garments. He didn't even look in that box. He just dumped them into the bag.

Danny found a box full of clothes he had worn just a couple years ago. Then he found another box of clothes that were larger than anything he had worn before. They were obviously boy's clothes. Danny even liked some of the shirts and jeans he saw in the box. Danny then realized these clothes belonged to his dad.

Danny only looked at the clothes briefly and then put them in the bag. His mom rarely said anything about his dad. If she knew there were more of his father's clothes in the garage, she wouldn't have had him clean the garage at all. Danny could have told his mom about it, but decided against it and continued to empty the boxes.

The boxes of clothes were completely finished in four large and very full garbage bags. Danny took a breather outside and looked at the progress he had made.

Mrs. Smith again poked her head outside. She said, "How's it going Danny?"

"I'm done with the clothes," he replied.

Mrs. Smith was much more calm and nice when she saw how much work Danny had already completed. She said, "Good. Will you do the tools next?"

"Yes, but how am I supposed to pack them up?" Danny asked.

"Put them in the boxes," Mrs. Smith said. "Don't worry about organizing them. Just put all

of the tools from that old work bench in the boxes as best you can then put everything in the car. I'll go drop it off once it's full."

"Okay," Danny said.

"If you find anything else that the Salvation Army could use, put it in the car too. Books, Videos, CDs. I think there's an old stereo back there too."

Danny needed a breather. The garage was the only place in the world that he felt claustrophobic. He procrastinated by grabbing two of the bags of clothes and dragging them over to his mom's car.

The old, brown station wagon in the driveway was the only car that worked, but the inside and outside of the car was worn from years of use. Danny thought nothing of throwing the garbage full of dusty and dirty clothes in the back of the car. He didn't think the car could get any dirtier. After putting both bags in through the tailgate, Danny went back to grab the other two bags. All of them fit into the car easily.

Danny slowly walked back to the garage, breathing deeply as he walked. Danny knew this

was a lousy job and a horrible punishment, but he didn't want to complain. It made him feel grown up. Nonetheless, he did want to get it over with. So, Danny stood in front of the door again, took a deep breath, and walked into the garage.

Danny made his way back to the pile of boxes that he just created. He grabbed one and put it on the floor next to the work bench. With a brush of his hand, a bunch of tools fell into the box. The box quickly filled up and became very heavy. With a lot of effort, Danny carried the box over to the station wagon then headed back into the garage.

Danny easily filled up three more boxes of tools. There were hand tools, saws, bolts, screws, and just random pieces of metal. Danny threw all of it in the boxes and then put them in the car. He grabbed an old stereo with a tape deck and put it on top of the bags of clothes. There were a few more boxes of videos that Danny easily put in the car too.

The station wagon was almost full. The load was so heavy the car was riding close to the ground. The majority of space in the car was filled, but there wasn't that much more stuff to

move in the garage. There were no more old clothes and no more tools. The random items had also disappeared. The only items yet to be moved were three more boxes underneath the work bench.

Danny tried to pick up the first box but it was extremely heavy. He slid it out instead and looked inside. It was filled with books. Danny looked at a few titles, but didn't recognize any of the books. There were a lot of books about music: *Repertoire of the Piano*, *Music of the Classical Period*, and *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Danny even found old copies of *Rolling Stone Magazine*. After skimming through the box, Danny didn't find any of them interesting enough to keep. With a lot of effort, he picked up the box and put it in the station wagon.

Danny slid out the next box. At first glance, Danny didn't want anything from this box either. It was filled with old music and songs that Danny had never heard before. Just to make sure he wasn't throwing away something special, he flipped through some of them: *Over There*, *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree*, *Butterfly Song*. Danny didn't want to play the piano, so there was no reason to keep any of it.

Underneath the sheet music, Danny did find something. He saw the name “Daniel Smith” written on the spine of a book. Daniel was Danny’s real name, but he never used it. His mom had called him Daniel a few times, but only when he was in trouble. If this was his book, he had never seen it before.

Danny picked it up and looked at it. It was called “Roger Meyer’s Guide to Piano Tuning and Piano Maintenance.” Danny opened it. Many of the pages were marked with pencil sketches and highlighted with a yellow marker. There were a lot of notes written in pen along the borders of many pages. Danny then turned to the inside cover. It said, “Daniel, You could start quite a business with this book alone. All the best, Karl.”

Danny realized this book belonged to his father. He even assumed that Karl was Mr. Curstmeyer. From the etchings and markings throughout the book, Danny thought it might be special. He put it aside and took the box to the car.

He didn’t spend a lot time looking through the final box. He assumed they were old books belonging to his mother: *The Babysitter’s Club*, *Sweet Valley High*, *Jane Eyre*, *Little Women*.

Danny immediately knew he would find nothing of interest in this box. He didn't have much strength left, but found enough to pick up the box and put it in the car. The car sank another few millimeters. It was completely full.

Mrs. Smith came out of the house with her keys. She was a little worried about the car being so full, but she didn't have far to drive.

"Looks great! Thank you, Danny," Mrs. Smith said. "I'll drop these off at the Salvation Army just around the corner. You can take a break while I'm gone. I'll be back in less than ten minutes."

Mrs. Smith started the car and inched forward. She pulled out of the driveway as slow as she could. From the weight of clothes and tools in the car, it was extremely close to the ground and Mrs. Smith didn't want to scrape the bottom of her car. The car unfortunately scrapped the ground anyway. Once she cleared the driveway, she picked up speed and headed down the block.

Danny went back into the garage and grabbed the book. He didn't want to play the piano, but he would like to fix the piano, especially if that's what his dad wanted to do! If he could fix

the beat up and out of tune piano in his living room, his mom could play it.

Danny turned to the first chapter, “Tools you will need.” Danny had a moment of panic. He just put all the tools in boxes and they were on their way to the Salvation Army! The first tool pictured in the book was in an “L” shape. Danny had seen the tool before. It was in a box that was taken away.

Danny was bummed. He was about to give up this new endeavor when he saw his mother pull back into the driveway. Danny ran up to her as she exited the car. The boxes of tools were still in the back of the station wagon.

Danny asked, “They didn’t want them?”

Mrs. Smith said, “We needed to organize them a little more than that. We can do that later.”

Mrs. Smith began to walk towards the house when she saw Danny open the car door. She couldn’t believe he was already starting to unload the boxes of tools. She thought this was very grown up of her son.

“Don’t worry about organizing them, Danny,” Mrs. Smith said. “Just put the boxes next to the trash. We’ll just throw them away.”

“Mom?” Danny said.

“Yes, Danny?”

“Could Mr. Curstmeyer come over for a lesson tonight?” Danny asked.

Mrs. Smith was surprised and skeptical. “Mr. Curstmeyer is not going to come over to answer questions about the Wallace Towers.”

Danny replied, “I will not say anything about ghosts or the Wallace Towers.”

“Or anything about haunted buildings or demons or paranormal activity...”

“I won’t say anything,” Danny said reassuringly.

Danny didn’t want to ask Mr. Curstmeyer about the Wallace Towers, he wanted to ask Mr. Curstmeyer how he could fix the piano.

“Alright, Danny,” Mrs. Smith said. “I’ll call and see if he can give you a lesson.”

Mrs. Smith felt a sigh of relief. She hoped this obsession with ghosts was almost over. She continued saying, “I’ll even make the lesson at 8pm, so you can see your show.”

“Thanks, mom!”

As soon as Mrs. Smith went inside, Danny took the first box and put it next to the trash. He then went to the garage and found his father’s book. He looked through the first chapter and saw five unusual tools he would need to tune the piano. As he skimmed through the rest of the book, he anticipated needing more than just those five tools, so he grabbed the box next to the trash and brought it to the work bench in the garage. He picked out as many useful tools as he could find. When all that was left in the box was old, rusty pieces of metal and tools that seemed to have no purpose at all, he took the box back to the trash.

After Danny had looked the through seven boxes of tools, he felt comfortable that he had the necessary equipment to fix a piano. He found the “L” shaped tool and the other four tools the book described in the first chapter. He was going to bring these five tools to his lesson tonight.

Mrs. Smith yelled from the kitchen window,
“Danny?”

Danny stepped out of the garage to answer,
“Yeah, mom?”

“Stop messing around in the garage. You’re done with your punishment. Mrs. Campbell called and Jack is done with his too. Why don’t you boys go to the park and do something outside?”

Chapter 18

The Last Nice Day

Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Campbell expected Thursday to be the last nice, sunny day before winter, so they sent Jack and Danny to the park to have fun with their friends. They assumed Danny, Jack, Mike, and Andrew would want to talk about what happened on Monday. Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Campbell resolved that at least they would be enjoying it outside in the park.

“We went down this long, dark, narrow hallway,” Jack said.

“Was that the one the creepy old guy vanished into during the season premiere?” Mike asked.

“Yeah. He lives back there,” Jack said.

“Would you guys stop calling him creepy?” Danny asked. “He’s just an old guy. He used to play the piano in huge recitals and concerts.”

“Did you see the broken window and fire escape that leads to the furnace room?” Andrew asked.

“Did you watch the show Andrew?!” Jack asked.

“Yes. I watched the entire marathon. It was awesome!” Andrew said. “I’m all caught up.”

“Nice!” Jack said enthusiastically.

Mike, the tough guy, was even impressed and said, “So, you finally aren’t a baby anymore.”

“We didn’t see where the furnace room was,” Danny said.

A lot of people were at the park. Danny, Jack, Mike, and Andrew were at a picnic table underneath a large tree. There was a pickup basketball game going on. People were playing tennis. Little kids were playing on the swings. Danny looked at all the people in the park as the other boys talked.

“What did you say to David Landers?” Mike asked Jack.

“Just that we loved his show,” Jack said.

Danny said unenthusiastically, “Mr. Curstmeyer didn’t want us to talk with anyone from the show.”

Jack then continued, “So, we asked Curstmeyer why and the cameras were rolling. We could be on tonight!”

“The next episode is tonight at 7pm, right?” Andrew asked.

“Yes, but we have to start planning how to get back to Wallace Towers again,” Jack said. “We need to get inside and just start exploring!”

“Let’s go over winter break!” Mike said.

“What should we tell our parents?” asked Andrew.

Danny had a sudden overwhelming feeling to play basketball or maybe just to swing on the swing sets. He didn’t really care about the Wallace Towers anymore. He wasn’t even looking forward to tonight’s episode. Danny wanted to ask Mr. Curstmeyer about how he could fix the piano. He even hoped that Mr. Curstmeyer could teach him how to tune the piano tonight. Maybe Mr. Curstmeyer could even tell him about his father.

“They should just tear down the Wallace Towers,” Danny said.

“What?!” Mike said.

“Are you kidding me?” Andrew asked.

“That building just hurts people,” Danny explained. “People scream, yell, break their ankles, jump out of windows, and even die there, just over a building.”

“But people are buried in its bowels,” Jack objected.

“So what. I’m sure they wouldn’t want people to keep getting hurt.”

The table was suddenly quiet. The existence of ghosts in the Wallace Towers and the awesomeness of exploring it had never been questioned. It had remained popular for well over a year and a half.

“Let’s play some basketball,” Danny said. “There’s an open court over there.”

Jack, Mike, and Andrew wanted to set up their adventure to the Wallace Towers, but they all suddenly realized how nice it was outside. They

were the only ones sitting down and talking. Everyone else was doing something: playing basketball, tennis, or simply walking around. The boys then agreed, they wanted to enjoy the day too.

Mike lived just across the street from the park. As he headed to his house, he yelled back to the other boys, “I’ll get a basketball.”

Chapter 19

The Untold Tragedy

Danny was sitting on the couch in the activity room, but he wasn't focused on his favorite television show of all time. He was very skeptical that he and Jack would be on *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*, but just in case he made it on the show tonight, the television was on and David Landers was speaking in the background.

It was 7:05pm and Danny was reading a book that used to belong to his father. At 8pm, he was going to convince Mr. Curstmeyer to teach him how to tune the piano. On Friday, he was going to try and fix everything else that was wrong with it including the keys that wouldn't move and the keys that didn't make any sound at all. He had finished reading the first chapter and felt ready to ask Mr. Curstmeyer about teaching him when he heard the sound of his own voice.

“Why do you live here, Mr. Curstmeyer?”
Danny's voice said on the television.

Danny quickly looked over at the screen. He couldn't believe his eyes. He was there, on television.

The voice of David Landers then filled the room as another picture flashed on the screen. The picture was familiar to Danny, but he didn't recognize it until David Landers said, "This simple question must have moved Mr. Curstmeyer, since nine years ago, Daniel Smith, the father of this child, was killed at the Wallace Towers."

Danny dropped the book. He scrambled down from the couch and sat in front of the television as David Landers continued. "After helping Mr. Curstmeyer move a piano into his home in the Wallace Towers on May 27th, 2001, Daniel Smith suffered an epileptic seizure."

A news clipping from an article about Danny's father was on the screen. The headline said, "Another Victim Claimed by the Wallace Towers."

Dr. Mickelson continued to tell the story. "Daniel Smith was more an unfortunate victim of circumstance rather than a victim of the paranormal activity in the Wallace Towers. The epileptic seizure he suffered would not have been

fatal, but in order to move the piano into Mr. Curstmeyer's house, which was in the center of the complex, they had to go through the Wallace Towers. After completing the move, Kurt Curstmeyer and Daniel Smith walked back through the Wallace Towers, locking it up when Daniel Smith had his seizure."

A picture of an ambulance appeared on the screen as David Landers then said, "Kurt Curstmeyer called the police. Paramedics arrived, but they became lost in the labyrinth of the towers. More than twenty minutes had passed before they reached Daniel Smith. By this time, he had already joined the ghosts of Wallace Towers."

The screen again flashed to Danny, Jack, and Mr. Curstmeyer as David Landers said, "We now witness the first confrontation between a fatherless child and the man who holds the deed to Wallace Towers."

The Danny on the screen asked Mr. Curstmeyer, "Don't you have any family?"

The screen cut to black. A commercial for soap came on the screen.

Chapter 20

The First Confrontation

Danny was at the piano, waiting for Mr. Curstmeyer. He looked as though he was waiting patiently for his lesson to begin, but underneath his expressionless face was a mixture of betrayal, hurt, and most of all, hate.

He knew he wanted to yell at Mr. Curstmeyer, but beyond that, he wasn't sure what he was going to do. He couldn't stop his mind from envisioning ways he could hurt Mr. Curstmeyer. He thought of kicking Mr. Curstmeyer's cane when he walked in or pushing him back out the door or even punching him.

Danny's thoughts were interrupted by three loud knocks that rang through the oak front door. Mrs. Smith quickly came into the room. She was surprised to see Danny already at the piano.

“Great, you’re already here!” Mrs. Smith said happily. She walked to the front door and opened it.

“Good evening Mr. Curstmeyer,” Claire said merrily.

“Good evening Claire,” Mr. Curstmeyer replied.

Mr. Curstmeyer came in and made his way to the piano. He was in good spirits as he walked to the chair next to the piano. Mrs. Smith told him on the phone earlier that day that Danny may be past his obsession with ghosts and he was looking forward to teaching a piano lesson without worrying about answering questions about the Wallace Towers. However, when Mr. Curstmeyer reached the chair, he found a reason to worry. There was a book about tuning pianos and piano maintenance on the chair. Mr. Curstmeyer had not seen the book in twenty years.

Danny saw Mr. Curstmeyer look at the book. “Do you recognize the book?” Danny said trying to cover his anger.

“I recognize it,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. He picked it up as he sat down in the chair. He

opened the cover and saw the inscription he had written to Danny's father.

Mr. Curstmeyer continued, "I gave it to your father so he could tune this piano."

"Oh," Danny said. "That must have been before he died moving a stupid piano for you!"

"Danny!" Mrs. Smith shouted. "Where...where did you hear that?"

"*The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* said my father died from moving a piano through the Wallace Towers," Danny said furiously. "Something about Epilepsy."

Claire quickly walked to the couch across from the piano and sat down. "Danny. I can explain," she said.

Danny quickly interrupted, "is it true?"

Mrs. Smith tried to speak saying, "Wait, Danny. I can..."

"Is it true?!" Danny asked again angrily. He only wanted to hear one of two words, yes or no.

Silence filled the room. No one moved until Mr. Curstmeyer spoke. “It’s true, Danny. Your father died in the Wallace Towers.”

“So, you killed him,” Danny said accusingly.

“Mr. Curstmeyer did not kill your father!” Mrs. Smith said quickly.

The room fell silent and Mrs. Smith buried herself in her hands. She couldn’t speak. She had told herself repeatedly that she kept the story from Danny to protect him, but at that moment, she realized she never told Danny because she didn’t know how to tell him. She had never been more ashamed of herself. She said softly, “I’m so sorry you found out this way.”

Danny’s anger did not subside. He continued to wait until one of them would tell him what had happened. Mrs. Smith recognized that Danny had the right to know, especially since someone other than a family member, someone other than his mother had told him part of the story, but she couldn’t bring herself to say anything except again saying, “This is my fault. You shouldn’t have found out this way.”

“Danny,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “I will tell you what happened.”

Mr. Curstmeyer knew that he could never establish any kind of friendship with Danny. Mr. Curstmeyer didn't know how to establish a friendship with anyone. Danny was barely his student.

Mr. Curstmeyer continued, “After I tell you, you can ask me anything you want about your father, what happened, me, or the Wallace Towers.”

Danny was still angry. At that moment, he hated his mother more than Mr. Curstmeyer. He was furious that she was going to let Mr. Curstmeyer tell him the story when she knew that he blamed Creepy Curstmeyer for killing his father. Danny however wanted to hear the story. He needed to hear the story.

Mr. Curstmeyer calmly began to tell the story. “Your father and your mother came to my concerts back when I still played the piano, but people gradually stopped coming. No one wanted to hear me play the piano let alone pay to hear me play. I had no money and was about to have no place to live. Owning the Wallace Towers was a

curse. At that time, the city wouldn't pay to destroy them. It would have cost millions of dollars. So, I moved into the house in the middle of Wallace Towers. Your father kept in touch with me and knew that I was living there."

Mrs. Smith finally found the strength to speak. She couldn't tell Danny the story alone, but she could help as best she could. She said, "Your father knew where Mr. Curstmeyer's piano was. It was your..."

"It was my father's piano," Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Danny then remembered seeing the piano in Mr. Curstmeyer's house. He had come so close to the thing that caused his father to die.

Mrs. Smith continued, "Your father wanted to move Mr. Curstmeyer's piano into his home so he could play. Mr. Curstmeyer refused at first, so Daniel rented a truck and drove it to the Wallace Towers himself."

Chapter 21

May 27th, 2001

Kurt Curstmeyer was more than surprised to hear a knock on his door. It was such an unusual event that for a second, he considered the possibility of ghosts actually haunting the Wallace Towers. He cautiously walked up to the front door. As he opened the door, he hoped that if it was a ghost, it had only dropped by to just borrow a cup of sugar.

“Greetings, Mr. Curstmeyer!” Daniel said merrily.

“Daniel? What are you doing here?”

“I have a surprise for you. Come on.”

Daniel began to walk down the narrow passageway that led from the house in the middle of the Wallace Towers back out to the street. Mr. Curstmeyer was feeling anti-social, but the charm and smile on Mr. Smith’s face convinced him to follow.

Daniel usually had this effect on people. He was tall and skinny, but he didn't get this way until his last year of high school. He was short and kind of stocky when he was young, but even then, people enjoyed being around him.

"It's great to see you Mr. Curstmeyer," Daniel said as they walked down the passageway.

"Watch out for that step Daniel," Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Daniel suddenly realized he stepped from cement to a piece of wood. The wood creaked but held fast.

"That's strange," Daniel said.

"I know, Daniel. I'm not sure why they didn't make this entire passageway out of concrete. I think there's a main system of tunnels that connects the towers underneath those strips of wood."

"Want to go exploring later?" Daniel said jokingly but slightly serious.

"No, thank you," Mr. Curstmeyer said. "I would rather see less of this place."

Daniel and Mr. Curstmeyer continued down the passageway. Up ahead, Mr. Curstmeyer was surprised to see a moving truck parked on the street. Daniel immediately hopped onto the back of the truck.

“Why do you have a moving truck?” Mr. Curstmeyer asked. “I moved in three months ago. Everything has already been moved.”

“Not everything,” Daniel said.

Daniel lifted the back gate of the truck. Inside, Mr. Curstmeyer saw his father’s grand piano wrapped in layers of cloth. The piano’s legs were removed and it was on its side lying on two carts. The piano was ready to be moved.

Mr. Curstmeyer was surprised. He had moved the piano to the Water Street Theatre in Downtown Davenport fifteen years ago. Back then, he was playing regular concerts there, but he hadn’t played in the theatre for the last six years.

The manager of the theatre wanted Mr. Curstmeyer to officially donate the piano, but Mr. Curstmeyer refused. This piano was too important to him. Every time Mr. Curstmeyer had asked for the piano to be returned, the manager would hint at

the possibility of Mr. Curstmeyer playing another concert. Mr. Curstmeyer knew he would never get another chance to play in the theater again, but removing it from the theatre would admit that his professional career as a pianist was over.

“How did you get it?” asked Mr. Curstmeyer.

“I showed up at the Water Street Theatre with a moving truck and a contract for you to play a concert,” Daniel said. “I told the manager he would either sign a contract giving you a concert next season or I was loading the piano on the truck. I’m sorry he didn’t give you a night to play, but now you have your piano back.”

“Thank you, Daniel! But I don’t know where we can put it.”

Daniel said, “That house back there is pretty big. There’s plenty of room.”

“How will we get it back there?” Mr. Curstmeyer asked.

Daniel lowered his head. He usually had two other people to help him move a grand piano

as big as this one, but his co-workers refused to go near the Wallace Towers.

Daniel said, “We don’t have any help, but I have the best wheeled supports I own underneath the piano. We just have to find smooth, level surfaces so we can wheel it back there.”

“I have two steps in front of my house,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“We can reserve our energy for those two steps, but I don’t think we can take it over those planks of wood we crossed over.”

Mr. Curstmeyer then said, “There is a way we can get to the house through the main entrance. I used it to get my heavier things back there.”

“Do you have the keys?” asked Mr. Smith.

“I have the master key, yes,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “It’s the only key that locks the house. Drive up to the main entrance and let’s get to work.”

“I can’t do this completely on my own, Mr. Curstmeyer,” Daniel said.

“...And I’m just an old man who can’t do anything,” Mr. Curstmeyer said sarcastically. “I haven’t moved a piano in a long time, but I still have the strength to help!”

Mr. Smith strapped the piano down and closed the back of the truck. He carefully drove up to the driveway. Mr. Curstmeyer decided to walk and helped Mr. Smith back the truck up right outside the main doors. Mr. Smith climbed out of the truck and lowered a ramp that moved straight into the main entrance.

Mr. Curstmeyer unlocked the glass doors in the front entrance and swung them open. Both men gently wheeled the grand piano down the ramp and into the Wallace Towers. Mr. Curstmeyer locked the front entrance as soon as the piano was inside.

Daniel had moved plenty of pianos, but walking into the Wallace Towers was an extra thrill for him and his labor intensive job. He wanted to look around, but he concentrated on keeping the piano on the carts. If the piano tipped over, Mr. Curstmeyer and Mr. Smith would not be able to get it back on the carts and no one would be

willing to help them in this building surrounded by urban legends.

“We’ll be going through these offices over here,” Mr. Curstmeyer said as he unlocked a large wooden door.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Curstmeyer pushed the piano into a long hallway that connected a lot of small offices. Mr. Curstmeyer tried to turn on the lights, but none of them came on. There were enough windows however that light was not a problem. There were also a few tight turns and corners, but the hallway was wide enough for the piano to swing around the corners and continue through the building.

“Mr. Curstmeyer,” Mr. Smith said. “I must admit, this is the most exciting piano move I’ve ever done.”

“Has business been good?” Mr. Curstmeyer asked.

“Very much so! I can’t believe it’s been ten years since you gave me that book on tuning and repairing pianos.”

“I’m glad I could help.”

The hallway ended. Mr. Curstmeyer unlocked a small door and flicked the light switch in the next room. The light turned on and Mr. Smith pushed the piano through.

Mr. Smith noticed the décor of the room had changed significantly. There were no offices in this long hallway. It wasn't used for business. It was used for maintenance. The light that shined on the walls made them look slightly yellow and plain. They continued down this hallway for a long time.

“How is little Danny?” Mr. Curstmeyer asked.

“He's three years old now. He's growing like a weed!”

Mr. Curstmeyer didn't tell Mr. Smith that the trip through the Wallace Towers was twice the distance as the passageway. He also didn't tell Mr. Smith there were a few doors and locks he was worried about being able to open, but having his piano back in his home or even in the Wallace Towers was worth every effort he could afford.

There were no doors in this hallway except for one at the very end. It was one of the doors

and locks Mr. Curstmeyer was worried about. It was a metal door with a deadbolt lock and a sliding latch mechanism.

The door, the lock, and the handle were rusty and difficult to move. Mr. Curstmeyer turned the key inside the padlock. At first the padlock wouldn't unlock, but Mr. Curstmeyer soon heard a click and the padlock sprung open.

“Now for the unpleasant part,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “You might want to move back a little.”

Mr. Smith moved the piano back to give Mr. Curstmeyer some room.

To unlatch the door, Mr. Curstmeyer had to slide a handle three inches to the right. He knew the handle and latch were so rusted that there was no reason to try using his hands. He lifted his foot and kicked the handle. It didn't budge on the first kick. Mr. Curstmeyer kicked it again and it moved. On the third kick, the handle moved completely to the right and Mr. Curstmeyer pulled on the door.

As Mr. Curstmeyer pulled the door open, a rush of wind started to blow into the door from

behind him and Mr. Smith. The metal and rust started to grind and the door started to vibrate until Mr. Curstmeyer opened the door completely. Once it was open, the door rested and remained open. To be on the safe side, Mr. Curstmeyer went into the room, found an old chair, and used it to prop open the door.

The room inside was large and dark. Mr. Curstmeyer reached for a light switch and flicked it on, but the lights didn't work. The only light in the room came from the hallway behind Mr. Curstmeyer and Mr. Smith.

“Daniel, wait here for a second,” Mr. Curstmeyer instructed.

Mr. Curstmeyer thought nothing of the Wallace Towers and its past, but this room did give him an uneasy feeling. He looked around. There were lockers and an old and dusty, wood table on his left. There was a pile of greasy equipment in the corner to the right. Mr. Curstmeyer then looked up to see a giant maze of ventilation systems above his head. He could hear air moving throughout the ventilation system.

Mr. Curstmeyer again felt a large breeze come from the door behind him. He looked up to

find where all the air was going. He saw a broken part of the ventilation system that went straight up through the ceiling. Mr. Curstmeyer felt the air zoom up towards this broken shaft.

“Everything alright, Mr. Curstmeyer?” Mr. Smith asked loudly so he could be heard above the sound of the rushing wind.

“Yes, Daniel. Let me open the next door and it shouldn’t be so windy.”

Mr. Curstmeyer walked up to another metal door on the opposite side of the room. He again unlocked the deadbolt and kicked the handle to open the door. It was much easier to push this door open.

As soon as the other door was open, the breeze equalized and the rush of wind stopped. Air still moved through both doors, but much more gently. Mr. Curstmeyer found a small cement block and put it against the door to make sure it wouldn’t shut.

“Alright, Daniel. Come on through,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Mr. Smith pushed the piano through the first door and entered the room with the ventilation system. Daniel couldn't help but look up at the vast array of pipes that zigzagged around the room. Mr. Curstmeyer however continued to be uneasy with this room.

“This is amazing, Mr. Curstmeyer,” Mr. Smith said.

“We have a job to do, Daniel,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Just to be safe, Mr. Curstmeyer let the piano and Mr. Smith go into the next room before him. Mr. Curstmeyer took another look at the ventilation system then joined Mr. Smith in the next room.

“I wonder if those pipes go through the entire complex,” Mr. Smith said.

“They could, but let's not find out.”

Mr. Curstmeyer felt comfortable with the remainder of the trip. If he remembered correctly, each room beyond the ventilation system had a window to the outside, so light was not a problem. The rooms were dirty and dusty, but for the most

part, they were free of furniture and debris. He continued to unlock the doors. He moved much more quickly than Mr. Smith who was beginning to struggle with moving the piano as his arms began to become tired.

Mr. Curstmeyer looked out the window. He could see his house. He looked ahead and saw the door that would lead them outside and to his front steps. Mr. Curstmeyer quickly and excitedly walked up to the door, unlocked the deadbolt, and moved the handle to pull open the door. He had walked through the Wallace Towers using this route only five times. Mr. Curstmeyer did the same thing each time he completed this journey. Even though he wouldn't admit it, he always walked outside and breathed a deep sigh of relief.

“Are we there?” Mr. Smith asked desperately.

“Yes, Daniel, we are here!” Mr. Curstmeyer said enthusiastically.

Mr. Smith pushed the piano out the door and wheeled it to the front steps. He then stepped away from the piano and put his hands on his knees. He needed to take a break. He looked at

the two steps in front of Mr. Curstmeyer's front door.

“Now for the difficult part,” Daniel said to himself.

Daniel and Kurt were very familiar with the process of setting up large pianos. Daniel knew this one was going to be a little more difficult since he didn't have his usual coworkers here to help, but he was determined to get the piano into the house. He walked up the steps and opened the front door.

“Should we put it right next to the stairs?” Mr. Smith asked.

“Yes, let's definitely put it there.”

Mr. Smith cleared a path for the piano. In his experience, he knew trouble most often occurred when something was in the way. After making sure everything was set, Mr. Smith moved the tail of the grand piano to the end of the stairs. He lifted the end up while Mr. Curstmeyer removed the cart. Mr. Smith immediately put the piano down.

Daniel's eyes grew large. It was the first time he felt the weight of the piano in his arms. He was worried that he wouldn't be able to do it, but since he had come this far, he knew he had to give it his best shot.

“Ready, Mr. Curstmeyer?”

Mr. Curstmeyer placed the cart at the top of the steps and said, “Ready.”

Both men lifted the tail end of the piano up the two steps and quickly set it again on the cart at the top of the stairs. They both then stepped away from the piano to take a breather.

“I hate stairs. Right, Kurt?” Daniel said.

“They're the worst part of the job,” Mr. Curstmeyer replied.

“Now, it's time for the heavy end,” Daniel said.

Mr. Smith braced himself and lifted the keyboard side of the piano slightly as Mr. Curstmeyer removed the cart. Mr. Smith then put the piano down again.

“I can’t believe you talked me into this line of work,” Daniel said.

“You’ve been making good money, haven’t you?” Mr. Curstmeyer objected.

“Yeah, but I’m moving this piano for free.”

Mr. Curstmeyer smiled. He put the cart right next to the piano at the top of the stairs. This was the most difficult part of moving a piano. Mr. Smith and Mr. Curstmeyer lifted the keyboard end of the piano, walked it up the two stairs, and quickly put it down on the cart.

After a moment, Mr. Smith and Mr. Curstmeyer pushed the piano inside the house. They stepped back to make sure they had moved the piano as close to the final spot on the wheeled carts. It was much easier to move the piano on wheels than on its legs.

“Actually, Mr. Curstmeyer,” Daniel said. “There was something I wanted to ask you in return for moving the piano.”

“I don’t know what I can offer you, Daniel.”

Daniel said, “Could you teach my son to play the piano?”

“I haven’t had a student for a while. You were one of my last.”

“I want you to keep playing and I want my son to learn.”

Mr. Curstmeyer hesitated for a moment. Most of his other students left because his skills and abilities at the piano began to decline. They moved on to other teachers, ones that were in the prime of their careers. Mr. Curstmeyer was worried by the thought of training another student just to have that student move to a younger, more popular teacher. Mr. Curstmeyer however did want to keep playing the piano. Having a student would ensure that he continued to play.

“I would greatly enjoy teaching your son,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“Well, you don’t have to start for a while,” Daniel said. “He’s only three.”

“Alright, how about in three more years?”

“Age six would be perfect.”

Mr. Smith easily attached the legs. Mr. Smith and Mr. Curstmeyer then rolled the piano onto the attached legs. With a razor blade, Mr.

Smith cut off the wrapping that held the cloth that protected the grand piano. The large and shiny, black piano glistened. It was an old piano, but still looked brand new. Mr. Curstmeyer immediately and enthusiastically played a few notes.

“This is wonderful,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“Well, it is yours,” Daniel replied.

“Thank you for bringing it!”

“It was my pleasure.”

Mr. Curstmeyer stopped playing the piano and lowered the lid that covered the keys. He then said, “I need to go lock up.”

“I’ll come with you,” Daniel said. “I have to take the carts back to the truck anyway.”

“Alright,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “I’ll lock up as we head back out to the street.”

Mr. Smith grabbed the two wheeled carts and dropped them at the bottom of the stairs. He was showing his youthful side as he began to push them with his foot into the door and into the Wallace Towers.

“Be careful in there, Daniel,” Mr. Curstmeyer said merrily.

Mr. Curstmeyer walked through the door and into the Wallace Towers. He then pushed the door closed, moved the handle back into the latched position, and locked the deadbolt.

Mr. Smith continued ahead of Mr. Curstmeyer. He could still hear the sound of Mr. Curstmeyer closing and locking doors behind him. He looked around intensely at everything that surrounded him. He had read a lot of stories about the Wallace Towers. He even heard about a few urban legends, satanic rituals, and murders, but nothing stood out as anything scary to Mr. Smith. The rooms simply seemed old and run down.

Mr. Smith pushed the wheeled carts into the ventilation room when he suddenly had a very strong and bad feeling. He then felt a rush of wind pushing him into the room. Mr. Smith felt the need to get somewhere safe. The only idea of a safe place was on the street, outside of the Wallace Towers. He began to quicken his pace forward into the ventilation room when he suddenly became very faint and began to panic.

Encompassed in the dark room, Mr. Smith fell to the floor.

“Daniel?” Mr. Curstmeyer yelled. He had heard something ahead but didn’t know what it was. “Daniel, are you okay?”

Without a response, Mr. Curstmeyer began to run ahead until he felt the familiar and haunting breeze pushing him into the ventilation room. Mr. Curstmeyer stopped to see Mr. Smith on the ground in the middle of the ventilation room. Daniel was shaking violently.

A terrifying feeling of dread passed through Mr. Curstmeyer as he saw a door in the distance, one of two doors that provided light to the dark room, slam shut in a loud bang. The room ahead became much darker. Mr. Curstmeyer rushed forward to try and reach his friend, but a rush of wind from behind Mr. Curstmeyer pushed him to the ground. Mr. Curstmeyer lifted his head just in time to see his friend engulfed in complete darkness as the metal door in front of him slammed shut in a loud bang.

Mr. Curstmeyer picked himself up and walked up to the door. He immediately kicked the handle, trying to open the door, but the handle

wouldn't move. Mr. Curstmeyer took a closer look at it and was horrified to see that the sliding handle was no longer in the right place. It was bent and lodged within the metal of the door.

Mr. Curstmeyer suddenly heard a buzzing sound. He began to look around to see what was causing it when he saw a crack in between the metal door and the door frame. The lights in the room had turned on and glowed in a faint yellow. Mr. Curstmeyer could see Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith continued to shake violently but gradually under the soft glow, he became calm and relaxed. Soon, Mr. Smith completely stopped shaking but he remained motionless on the ground.

Unable to get in the room, Mr. Curstmeyer rushed back to the house. He unlocked and opened the metal doors and to save time, he kicked down the smaller doors. He quickly reached his front door and ran inside. He picked up the phone and dialed 911.

“I have an emergency at 1313 West Twenty Third Avenue,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“What is the nature of your emergency?” a calm but authoritative voice said on the other end of the phone.

“A young man named Daniel Smith fell to the ground and started shaking violently,” Mr. Curstmeyer said frantically.

“I have dispatched a paramedic to your location. Was he having a seizure?”

“I believe so.”

“Has the seizure stopped?” the voice asked calmly.

“Yes.”

“Is he still breathing?”

“I don’t know,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “He’s in the Wallace Towers and I wasn’t able to get to him.”

“The Wallace Towers? He isn’t there next to you?” A hint of panic began to sound in the person’s voice.

“I have to go let the paramedics in,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“I am dispatching fire and police to your location.”

“Very good.”

Mr. Curstmeyer hung up the phone and began to run down the passageway leading to the street. After thirty feet, Mr. Curstmeyer heard the snapping of wood. His right leg suddenly gave way and he fell to the ground in pain. He felt down his right leg. He couldn't feel his knee cap.

Pain or not, Mr. Curstmeyer rose to his feet and moved down the passageway as fast as he could. Up ahead, he could hear the sirens and squealing tires of the paramedics. As soon as he made it to the street and in view of the paramedics, he pointed to the main entrance of the Wallace Towers.

“There! He's in there!” Mr. Curstmeyer yelled.

A fire truck arrived just after the paramedics and Mr. Curstmeyer continued to hobble and limp toward the main entrance. Mr. Curstmeyer didn't attempt to find his keys. He picked up a rock and through it at one of the glass doors. It broke and cracked but did not give way. A fireman, armed with an axe, took this as a hint that they needed to go through the main entrance. Without a second thought, the fireman swung the axe into the glass, shattering it. All of the pieces fell to the ground.

Paramedics attempted to aid Mr. Curstmeyer but he refused their attention. He was one step behind the fireman and yelled, “I know the way. Let me through!”

Mr. Curstmeyer led the paramedics and the firemen into the Wallace Towers. They quickly headed through the wooden door, down the hallway and offices, and into the maintenance hallway.

Mr. Curstmeyer saw the metal door up ahead. He could still see a faint glow coming from inside the room.

“Inside that door!” yelled Mr. Curstmeyer.

One of the firemen ran up to the door and inspected it. He found the handle. Mr. Curstmeyer was shocked that the fireman moved it with ease and opened the door. Once the door was open, the ominous glow faded away. The room was dark. The only thing Mr. Curstmeyer could see was Daniel Smith, on the ground. His skin was blue. He was not breathing.

Mr. Curstmeyer's Burden

“The paramedics made it to your father very quickly, just not fast enough,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“No one could have seen this coming, Danny,” Mrs. Smith said.

Danny felt that Mr. Curstmeyer and his mother had finally been honest about the entire story, but their words did not help Danny or give him any comfort.

Danny turned to Mr. Curstmeyer and said calmly, “This is your fault.”

Mr. Curstmeyer braced himself. At that moment, he was powerless against anything Danny would say. The death of Danny's father would always be a burden Mr. Curstmeyer carried on his shoulders. Danny realized he could add weight to this burden and Mr. Curstmeyer knew there would be no defense against anything Danny would say.

At that point, Mr. Curstmeyer could do nothing but leave, so he stood up from the chair and walked to the door.

“The piano is stupid,” Danny said coldly to Mr. Curstmeyer’s back. Mr. Curstmeyer stopped walking and stood in place for a moment.

Mrs. Smith wanted to stop Danny, but she couldn’t speak. She had worried every day of her life about how she was going to tell Danny about his father. Since she had never said anything, Danny found out from a television show. This was her worst nightmare.

Danny continued his assault and said, “You spent your whole life at something that is just stupid. You’ve wasted your life. Would anyone care if you were even alive tomorrow?”

Mr. Curstmeyer remained motionless. He wanted to be hurt by Danny. The pain and insults delivered by Danny were the punishment Mr. Curstmeyer felt he deserved. After another moment, Mr. Curstmeyer continued to walk to the door. He headed outside and faded into the night.

“Danny?...” Mrs. Smith said. “I’m sorry you found out this way.”

Danny climbed up the stairs. As he headed to his room, he said, “My Dad died for nothing.”

Mrs. Smith heard Danny close his door. It remained closed for the rest of the night.

Chapter 23

ESCAPE

Mrs. Smith's second worst day of her life immediately followed the worst day of her life.

She wanted to plead with her boss that she needed to be home today, but she was already treading on thin ice. Having already called in to take a day off on Wednesday, doing so again on Friday would have caused a jealous uproar from her coworkers and possible action by her boss to fire her. Mrs. Smith understood why her coworkers felt they were treated unfairly because in all honesty, she knew she was given special treatment. She only drove into work three times a week while everyone else had to drive in five times a week.

Mrs. Smith walked up to Danny's door. It had remained closed since 8:12pm last night. She opened the door and looked in on Danny. Danny was asleep on his bed still in his clothes, facing away from the door.

Mrs. Smith looked out Danny's window and decided not to wake him. It was 4:25am and it was pouring rain outside. It was supposed to rain all day which made Mrs. Smith feel better. She wasn't as worried about Danny getting into trouble. She decided to get to work as soon as her work building opened at 5am. She would work without a break and without lunch. She would be finished in eight hours and would immediately return home. Mrs. Smith felt as long as she could reach Danny by the phone in the house or Mrs. Campbell's house phone, then she would know that he was okay. She shut the door and headed to her car.

The phone rang at 9am sharp. Danny was lying on his bed awake. He knew his mother was calling so he didn't pick up the phone.

Without putting the receiver down, Mrs. Smith immediately called Mrs. Campbell's house phone.

Without saying hello or using any greeting at all, Mrs. Smith asked "Is Danny there?"

Mrs. Campbell said, “Not yet. He hasn’t been by.”

Without a goodbye, Mrs. Smith hung up the phone. She then quickly text messaged her son, “Where R U?”

Mrs. Smith watched her cell phone closely for three minutes, and then a single word returned via text message, “room.”

Mrs. Smith was furious that her son gave her such a panic attack, but she was relieved to know where he was. Mrs. Smith texted Danny back saying, “Pick up the phone!” After fifteen seconds, she called the house phone.

Danny, still in his clothes from yesterday, exited his room and headed downstairs to the kitchen. He reached the phone as soon as it started to ring. He picked it up but did not say anything.

“Hello?” Mrs. Smith finally said.

“I’ll head over to Mrs. Campbell’s house after I shower and get dressed.”

“Okay. Don’t forget to brush your teeth and call me when you get over there.”

Danny hung up the phone. Mrs. Smith wasn't happy but she was content in knowing where Danny was. When work forced her to be away from her son, her mind played tricks on her. She would imagine that Danny was in bad situations and life threatening circumstances. She often just wanted to be reassured that he was still alive.

Mrs. Smith sent another text message to Danny. "Please go over to Campbell's house soon."

Danny had no intention of going to the Campbell's house at all today. He had been waiting for his mom to confirm he was at home. He turned on the lights in his room, the activity room, and the living room. He even turned on the television. Danny then headed to the back yard and pulled out his bike.

He looked over at Jack's house. Mrs. Campbell was in her kitchen when the phone rang. As soon as Mrs. Campbell turned away from the window, Danny made a sprint for it and started pedaling his bike toward the Wallace Towers.

"Hello?" Mrs. Campbell said.

“I’m sorry for hanging up the phone so quickly Jackie,” Mrs. Smith said.

“Its okay, Claire. Is everything alright?”

“No it isn’t,” Mrs. Smith said. “Danny found out about his father last night. It was on that stupid television show.”

“Oh no,” Mrs. Campbell said. “How is he taking it?”

“I don’t know yet. He’s been ignoring me since he found out.”

Mrs. Campbell looked over at Mrs. Smith’s house. She said, “Well, I see the light’s are on. He must be up.”

“He said he was going to take a shower, get dressed, and then come over.”

“I’ll keep an eye out for him,” Mrs. Campbell said reassuringly. “It’s also pouring down rain. I couldn’t imagine him going anywhere in this.”

“Let’s give him an hour,” Mrs. Smith said. “He’s probably going to move pretty slowly today.”

Danny's adrenaline surged. He was pedaling as fast as he could and recklessly riding his bike through the rain. Danny didn't stop and walk up large hills as he did before. He pedaled up each hill. He even increased his speeds on each downhill by continuing to pedal. He ignored stops signs in the neighborhoods and even jaywalked across large streets whenever he spotted an opening in traffic.

The rain hit Danny's face and soaked the front half of his clothes, but he didn't care. The water that soaked him felt refreshing. It cooled him off from the exercise of riding his bike and focused his mind on getting to the towers.

Danny realized he didn't have that much time to get to the Wallace Towers before his mom would find out he wasn't at home or at the Campbell's house. He crossed Thunderbird Road and stopped underneath an awning at a bus stop. He pulled out his cell phone and checked the time. It had been forty minutes since he communicated with his mother in some form.

Danny text messaged his mom, "Am out of the shower. Can I watch TV over here? Want to be alone."

Mrs. Smith texted back, “you can watch one half hour show, then go over to the campbells by 1030.”

“Thanks, mom,” Danny texted. He then continued on his way to the Wallace Towers.

Mrs. Smith returned to work but within a few minutes, she needed some further reassurance. She called Mrs. Campbell again.

“Hello?” Mrs. Campbell said.

“Hi Jackie, it’s Claire again. Are you still in your kitchen?”

“Yes,” Mrs. Campbell said with the patience of a saint.

“Can you see in my activity room?”

“The curtains are closed, but something’s going on in there.”

“Is the television on?” Mrs. Smith asked.

“Yes, there’s some flashes of light going on and off.”

“Thank you,” Mrs. Smith said. “Danny should be over by 10:30.”

“Sounds good, I’ll continue to look for him.”

Danny felt exhausted but incredibly relieved as he approached the gas station he and Jack stopped at on Monday. Danny knew he had spent all of his energy in the first half of the trip, but he also knew a three mile downhill section was just ahead. He could then coast and recover.

Danny pulled into the gas station to get out of the rain. He checked the time on his cell phone. It was 10:35am. Danny could think of no other way to stall. His mom would soon find out he was not home.

Danny looked up. In the far distance, he could see the top of the Wallace Towers again. He wasn’t exactly sure what he was going to do when he reached the towers. Danny wanted to destroy them. He wasn’t sure how he could do it, but that was his goal. Even if Mr. Curstmeyer and his house were still within its boundaries, he would destroy the towers. He would destroy it all. Danny shut off his cell phone and put it away. He hopped back on his bike and continued to the towers.

Mrs. Campbell noticed it had passed 10:30 and she had not seen Danny yet. She called Mrs. Smith at work, but she did not pick up.

Mrs. Smith was in a meeting with her coworkers and her boss. She quickly checked the time on her cell phone. It was 10:37. Without the ability to call on a phone, she text messaged Danny saying, “Are you at Campbells yet?”

Mrs. Smith lifted her head to give everyone in the room the impression that she was still involved in the conversation, but she kept one eye on her phone. Without a response within five minutes, Mrs. Smith excused herself from the meeting and returned to her desk. She immediately called Mrs. Campbell.

Before Mrs. Campbell had a chance to say hello, Mrs. Smith asked, “Is Danny over at your house yet?”

“Not yet, Claire,” Mrs. Campbell said. She looked out of her kitchen window. She could see Danny’s room. She said to Mrs. Smith, “The lights are still on in his room. Should I send Jack over?”

Mrs. Smith sent another text message to Danny. “Where R U?” She then said to Mrs. Campbell, “Yes, please send Jack over.”

Mrs. Campbell yelled upstairs, “Jack, come down here please.”

Jack was soon in the kitchen. Mrs. Campbell said quickly, “Is Danny with you?”

“No,” Jack said.

Mrs. Campbell immediately said, “Go over and bring him over here for me.”

Mrs. Smith overheard this exchange and immediately had a mild panic attack. She texted Danny one more time saying, “GET OVER TO THE CAMPBELLS NOW!”

Mrs. Campbell said, “Jack’s on his way over.”

Mrs. Campbell remained on the phone, looking out the kitchen window. She saw Jack go into the Smith’s house. In a short time, Jack stepped out of the Smith’s house. He looked over at Mrs. Campbell and shrugged his shoulders.

“Claire,” she said. “He’s not here or in your house.”

Mrs. Smith hung up the phone. She looked up from her desk at the meeting that just concluded. Everyone except her boss had left the conference room. She quickly went back in.

“Henry, I have an emergency,” she said to her boss.

Henry, a fair but sometimes strict employer, replied, “It’s only 11am and you were not here on Wednesday.”

“I know, but I’ve been here since 5am and my son has disappeared.”

“Oh, that is an emergency,” Henry said. “Go find him. Call the next few hours a long lunch while you get things cleared up. It would be best if you came back for your remaining few hours at some point today though.”

“Thank you, Henry,” Mrs. Smith said as she quickly ran out the door. She grabbed her keys and headed to her car.

Mrs. Smith drove home as fast as she could. She bent if not broke many traffic laws from her

work to her home, but she didn't care. She needed to find her son.

She pulled into the driveway and noticed all of the lights in the house were on. She immediately ran through the front door and into the house. If Danny was home, Mrs. Smith would never forgive him for the turmoil he put her through.

Mrs. Smith yelled, "Danny?!"

She climbed the stairs and looked in his room. She looked in the activity room. She even used a cane to open the attic door. She climbed up but he wasn't there either. Mrs. Smith soon found herself alone in the kitchen of her home. She didn't know where Danny was. She especially didn't know that Danny had completed his journey and at that moment, stood in front of the Wallace Towers.

Destroying the Towers

The rain continued to pour down. Danny was soaked from head to toe, but he didn't care. He stood before the Wallace Towers. He looked at them for a long time, trying to devise a plan to make them crumble to the ground.

Across the street, Danny dropped his bike in the water and the mud. He picked up a rock as he walked toward the building and threw it at a window. A faint crack was heard through the rain as the rock hit an already broken window.

This small act of vandalism made Danny feel good. He had never broken a window or wall on purpose before. He suddenly wished he had all the standard items of an average hoodlum: cans of spray paint, a slingshot, a crowbar. Danny didn't have those things, so he put his rage into the rocks that surrounded him in the mud on the ground. He picked up a large rock and hit a window, breaking it. He picked up an even bigger rock and threw it

at the building, hitting the bricks. The rock left a scuff on the wall.

The temporary delight in damaging the Wallace Towers soon wasn't enough for Danny. He wanted the entire building to collapse, but he thought there would be little chance of bringing down the entire structure without a bulldozer or crane. So, he decided to create the largest visual impact possible. He was going to break as many windows with rocks as the strength of his arms would allow.

Danny picked up a small rock so he could work on his aim. He threw it and hit his target, a small window on the second floor. The window shattered but did not break. The rock fell to the ground and landed in a small crevice near the building. Danny then heard a familiar ring. He ran up to the crevice and remembered what had happened on Monday. Throwing a big rock on the steel foundation made the entire building vibrate like an earthquake.

Danny was exhilarated by the possibility that he could destroy the towers by himself. He went back to the mud and empty lot across the street and found a large rock. He picked it up and

carried it over to the crevice. The mud from the rock stained his clothes but Danny didn't care. He went up to the crevice, lifted the rock above his head, and with both hands Danny threw the rock down into the crevice. The rock hit the steel foundation and the building began to shake.

Danny stood back to watch the damage and yelled, "Break! Damn it, break!"

A few windows cracked and some dust and tiny pieces of brick fell to the ground. Danny was even more enraged by the building's resistance to collapse. He went back across the street and found an even larger rock. Danny had trouble carrying it to the crevice, but the thought of destroying this evil place pumped through his veins. He lifted the massive rock as high as he could. The rock went as high as his chest when he hurled it into the crevice.

The loud ringing from the steel foundation was deafening. Danny plugged his ears as he stood back to watch the building. He wanted the entire thing to come down.

The building shook violently. Dozens of windows broke. Bricks began to fall. The low, grumbling sound below the ringing was loud, but

the vibrations soon began to dissipate and the tower before him still stood.

Danny went back across the street and found two rocks. He was going to throw one rock as hard as he could, then throw a second rock when the towers were already shaking. He walked back to the crevice and threw the first rock. The building began to shake as Danny threw the second rock, but Danny noticed a problem. The second rock had hit another rock already in the crevice. The building soon stopped shaking with very little damage.

Danny looked down into the crevice. He could see only broken patches of the steel foundation. Danny picked up a small rock and threw it down the crevice, but it mostly hit the other rocks. The ringing was weak. The building did not shake at all.

Danny's determination did not subside. Without being able to destroy the Wallace Towers from the outside, Danny decided to find a way to get inside to confront the ghosts and demons that haunted the building. They were the ones who killed his father. Danny needed to get inside and destroy whatever possessed the Towers.

Danny found a metal door on the side of the building. He kicked it as hard as he could, but the door did not move. He went to a second door. He threw a rock at it then kicked it, but the door did not budge.

Danny continued to look for the next door, when he came to the passageway leading to Mr. Curstmeyer's house. Danny thought of trying to find more doors and crevices, but decided it was time to confront Mr. Curstmeyer. Mr. Curstmeyer would know a way into the towers. He could show Danny where his father was killed.

Danny marched up the passageway. Rain poured down the bricks as he sloshed through puddles of water. Danny was ready to pound on Mr. Curstmeyer's front door. He rounded the first turn, marching straight down the hallway. He saw Mr. Curstmeyer's front door as he walked through some newspapers. Danny then suddenly heard the sound of wood cracking and then breaking.

Danny fell through the floor. He landed on the wet ground with a loud and deep thud. He fell far enough that it hurt, but he knew right away that he could get up and walk.

He opened his eyes. Beyond the small light that shined down from the broken floor above him, the room was pitch black. The only thing Danny could see was the faint, white outline of a door frame ten feet in front of him. Danny felt the ground beneath him. It was wet from the hole above him that he had just created. Danny then realized the ground was metal. It was steel.

Danny yelled, “Help! Help!”

Danny waited for a minute, but no one came.

Trapped

Danny looked around the room for anything he could climb. He then looked again at the narrow hole he fell through. The hole was more than ten feet above him. He gave a quick jump for the ledge of the hole, but he was at least two feet short. Danny then looked to the only door out of the room.

Danny slowly proceeded to the door. Each footstep caused a small vibration in the ground that rang through the room and the room shook slightly with each vibration. Danny then heard a footstep that wasn't his. Danny quickly turned around but in the process accidentally hit something. Whatever he hit fell to the ground. Danny heard the shattering of glass followed by the shriek of grinding metal.

Danny ran to the door and opened it. He clutched the inside of the door, frantically looking for a light switch. When he found one, he turned it

on and a light inside the room glowed. Before looking in this next room, he turned and looked back where he came from. The additional light shined into the room where he fell. The ground was covered in mud and grime that had dripped down from the wooden boards above for years. The remains of a glass bottle also lay on the ground with scattered trash. It was not a place where he would want to confront something paranormal.

Danny turned back to the lighted room and stood in the doorway. It was a small room that was mostly empty except for one lone wooden and wheeled chair, a few shovels, and some work boots. Danny tried to stand on the chair, but it immediately tipped over. Danny caught his balance, but he knew the chair wouldn't help him get back out to the passageway to Mr. Curstmeyer's house. He needed to go into the Wallace Towers. The only way out of the haunted structure was through it.

Danny stepped forward but then smelled something burning. He looked up at the light bulb. Like the entire room, it was covered in dirt and dust. The heat from the light bulb was burning the dust.

Danny proceeded to another door and the only way out. He opened it just a crack and peeked in the next room. There was already a little bit of light, so he opened the door completely.

The room was large and filled with wooden and metal desks. Danny assumed it used to be an office. There were still some papers on a few of the desks. Danny picked up a piece of paper. It was stationary that had a symbol on the top of the page. It said Kingman Construction.

Danny looked beyond the desks to the corners of the room. He saw shovels and hard hats and construction tools. Danny realized this office had been the headquarters for the company that built the Wallace Towers.

Danny wanted to find a way out. He still wanted to take on the ghosts and demons that plagued this place, but he wanted to have an escape route if necessary. Danny looked for the source of light in the room. He then saw one small window less than a foot high that was just a couple inches away from the ceiling. Danny immediately grabbed a chair and sprinted to the window. It was at the top of his reach and covered with chicken wire. Danny knew any attempt to break the

window and crawl out would result in a lot of cuts and bruises. He decided not to try it and then looked around the room for another exit.

There were two doors on the other end of the large room, but Danny realized these two doors would take him farther into the Wallace Towers and away from any windows that would reach the passageway. When he went through either of the doors, he could only hope he would make it to a window or a door that opened to the street.

Danny opened the first door. The next room was pitch black. Danny reached for a light switch and turned it on, but nothing happened. Danny closed the door and hoped there was a lighted room beyond the other door.

Danny opened the second door. On the other side, there was a large hallway with doors on both sides of the hallway. There was already a light shining around the corner, so Danny headed down this hallway. He carefully checked each door to see if it was unlocked. If there was a door that was unlocked, Danny opened the door slightly, reached in his hand, and checked for a light switch.

The first door that was unlocked had a working light. Once the light was on, Danny opened the door. Danny stood in the doorway of a large empty room. He took a quick look around. There were no doors. There were no windows.

Danny found two other unlocked doors, but the lights inside them did not work, so he continued down the hallway. He turned a corner and approached the light that had already been on. Just beyond the light, Danny found a door with a push bar. The door was very stiff, heavy, and difficult to push, but he opened the door. He could see there was a light inside the next room.

Danny saw a metal stair case beyond the door. He looked up. The stairs led up as far as Danny could see. There was one light that continued to glow about three stories up. It was another old light that gave off a yellow glow.

Danny pushed the heavy door until he could feel it lock in the open position. Danny let go of the door and checked to make sure it would stay open. Once he felt comfortable that it wouldn't close, Danny placed his foot on the first step and began to climb the stairs. Danny hadn't walked up more than five steps when the door behind him

suddenly retracted and slammed behind him with a bang. Danny turned around, ran down the few steps, and pulled on the door. It wouldn't budge!

Danny was nervous that something in the room made the door close. He spun around and put his back to the door, looking for anything that would have caused the door to close, but Danny didn't see anything.

Danny didn't like being in this helpless position any longer. He pulled out his cell phone and turned it on. He wasn't going to call anyone just yet, but he wanted to make sure he could use it if necessary.

The cell phone glowed in the dark light. It vibrated and a short theme erupted from the phone as it turned on. The short song echoed loudly through the staircase. Danny looked up to make sure he hadn't disturbed anything.

The cell phone was in a normal working mode, but Danny's heart sank as the phone couldn't find a signal. He held it up in the air and waited a few seconds, but the phone still could not connect to anything. Danny then realized that he was deep inside the Wallace Towers, in the middle

of a massive steel structure. Trying to get a signal would be hopeless.

Danny put his cell phone away and looked around the room again. When he felt reassured that he was alone in the room, he walked up to the first step and looked up. The stair case did not have any windows. Danny's only choice was to go up and hope he could find an open door.

Danny climbed the stairs slowly, attempting not to make too much noise on the metal staircase. He reached the first floor and tried the door, but it wouldn't open. He climbed to the second floor, but that door also wouldn't open. Danny didn't want to go farther up the staircase, but he had no choice. Without an exit from this staircase, he could not escape.

Danny soon climbed past the old, yellow light into the darkness and creaking stairs above, checking each door as he climbed. He had reached what he thought was the twelfth floor. The light had become very dim and the door was difficult to see. Danny reached out towards the place where he thought a door knob should be, but there wasn't one there.

Danny then realized he could use his cell phone as a light. He pulled out the phone and opened it up. A small light shined on the door. Danny looked at it very closely. The spot where the door knob should be was heavily beaten. The metal door was gashed and broken. Danny reached in with his fingers and pulled at the gash. After a small tug, the door became loose and swung open.

Danny shined his cell phone into the dark room. There were two doors that proceeded farther into this floor, but before proceeding, Danny shined the phone on the outside door in the staircase. If he was on the twelfth floor, he needed to know what tower he was in.

Danny found a placard on the outside of the door. It said, "12th Floor, Tower A."

Danny slowly and carefully went up to the door on the right. It didn't say anything. He then shined the cell phone on the door on the left. The door said, "Theatre Sets, Inc."

Danny backed away from the door. He knew the ghost of a young woman named Amy Lipska still haunted this floor, the ghost of a woman who suddenly disappeared from this

company. Danny slowly made his way back to the staircase and decided to continue to climb the stairs to look for another exit.

The light below seemed quite distant as Danny approached the fifteenth floor. He continued to use his phone to light the way, but each door was locked and Danny started to become nervous about going higher up Tower A. On the sixteenth floor, he saw another door that was missing a door knob. He tried to pull open the door with his fingers, but it wouldn't move.

Danny turned around and shined the light of the phone up the next set of stairs when he saw writing along the wall. The writing didn't form a sentence. It said, "Margaret say...you...now...jump...or"

Danny turned the corner and shined the cell phone light on the door of the seventeenth floor when he saw the words "GET OUT" in massive, dripping letters that covered the entire wall. The door was open but suddenly, Danny heard a rustling sound on the stair case above him. The sound then shot up the metal stair case in quick, ringing footsteps.

Danny panicked! He wasn't ready to take on something paranormal. If he came across something he couldn't handle, he had no means of escape. He turned around and bolted down the staircase, jumping frequently to skip multiple steps at a time. The sound of his feet landing on the metal staircase thundered throughout the room.

He had reached the twelfth floor again. He quickly turned and formed a defensive stance as he looked back at where he came from. The echoes of footsteps slowly faded away. Danny waited a few more seconds and listened. He could only hear the slight breeze that came from the open door that led to the twelfth floor. Danny then decided to not disturb the ghost of Margaret towards the top of the tower. Amy may have disappeared, but Margaret had jumped to her death from the top of Tower A.

Danny turned and entered the twelfth floor. "Amy?" he said. "I'm sorry that I am interrupting you. I'm only looking for a way out."

Danny proceeded and went through the door on the right. The room beyond was massive. On this half of the floor, there were no inner walls. In

every direction, there was glowing light that came from dirty and barred windows.

Danny quickly rushed to the windows and wiped away the dirt to look outside. It was still pouring rain. The rain was so thick he could barely see the ground from the twelfth floor.

Danny checked his cell phone. He was glad to see that something was coming through, but only one bar of service went in and out. He could send a text message, but since it was Friday and his service was blocked, he would only be able to text his mom. He wasn't ready to ask for her help.

Danny then looked over at the next tower. He saw a fire escape and realized each tower had multiple fire escapes on the outside. He went to the edge of the windows and followed them all the way around the room. There wasn't a fire escape to be found. Danny then knew the fire escape must be through the Theatre Sets, Inc. offices on the other side of the floor.

Danny retraced his steps and went back into the room adjacent to the stairs. "Amy," he said softly and nervously. "Again, I am sorry. I only want to find a way out."

Danny pushed the Theatre Sets front door slightly open and peeked inside. The next room was very small and dark. Danny could see a long desk and multiple doors that could lead beyond the room. Danny didn't see or hear anything move, so he finished opening the door, turned on a light switch, and stepped inside.

The room Danny had walked into was very different than the rest of the Wallace Towers. Everything still seemed in place. The desk was covered with papers, pencils, and pens. There was also an old telephone and a typewriter on the desk. There was even a fake plant in the corner. Danny thought if someone came in and cleaned and dusted, Theatre Sets, Inc. could be open for business tomorrow.

There were two glass doors that led out of the room. Danny walked up to them and looked through. On the opposite side, Danny could see two elevators! He pulled on the doors, but they wouldn't move. Danny then found and pulled on a latch near the top of the door. The door opened.

Danny ran up to the elevator and pushed the button to go down. He was thrilled to see that the button glowed. He looked above the elevator door

at numbers that also glowed. The numbers tracked the elevator's progress. It started on the ground floor and moved up. Suddenly, Danny heard the grinding of metal come from the elevator shaft. The glowing numbers above the elevator suddenly disappeared after three. It was enough to convince Danny to move on.

Danny went back inside the Theatre Sets, Inc. He continued past the front desk and went deeper into the other half of the twelfth floor. The next room was just as small as the previous one and the light did not work, but there was enough light that Danny could check the next door. Beyond the next door, Danny found a small hallway that connected a dozen offices. A small light shined bright enough that he could walk down the hallway.

All of the doors were open to the offices, so Danny slowly checked each one. Danny thought they were the most unusually decorated offices he had ever seen. They didn't have typewriters, phones, and stationary like the one next to the elevator. One office had lots of makeup. Another office had sketches of sets and drawings scattered throughout the room.

Danny turned a corner and was losing light from the hallway quickly, but he could see a faint light up ahead. He could also hear the light sound of rain. There were two more offices. He quickly looked inside the first one. He ran past a large wooden desk and up to the window to look for the fire escape. He could see one just a little farther down the side of the building.

Danny turned around and was about to head out of the office but then he saw the name Amy carved into the desk in large letters. Danny backed away slowly, but accidentally tipped over a small table. There were a lot of things on the table that fell to the ground. Suddenly, a loud and deafening roar, like a siren, erupted from the floor. The floor shook from the massive sound.

Danny fled to the other office, looking for the fire escape, but there wasn't a window in this office at all. Danny then saw that the office was covered in paintings and pictures of a young woman. Danny's eyes then saw a mirror just ahead of him. He looked into the mirror. Amy was right behind him, reaching out her hand. She was going to grab him!

Danny quickly turned and fled. The siren behind him still roared. He was running to the stairs and heading back down to the hole he fell through. He would climb up and out of the hole, even if it meant cuts and bruises, even if he had to drag everything he could find into the room to build a pile he could climb to reach the hole.

Danny ran past the front desk when something caught his eye. A faint red light now came from the lobby just beyond the glass doors. Since the siren was beginning to die away, Danny quickly stepped through the glass doors to check it out. An elevator door was open and a red light shined from inside the elevator. The siren had stopped completely. Danny remained in front of the elevator, contemplating whether to step in or not.

The siren began to erupt again in an even louder, deafening roar. Danny looked back at the glass doors. Something was touching the glass doors! Danny stepped inside the elevator. He wanted to get as far away from this place as possible. He pushed the button for the first floor. The elevator doors closed and it began to descend.

With every passing floor, Danny felt more at ease. On the first or even second floor, he wouldn't have to find a fire escape. He only needed to find a window to jump through.

The elevator light above the door shined a little light behind the number of each floor. 11. 10. 9. Danny was extremely cautious with his luck. He didn't want anything to happen, so he remained motionless in the very center of the elevator. 8. 7.

A horrific sound of screeching metal came from everywhere! The elevator's descent had slowed down. The lights above the elevator door that showed the floor numbers had vanished. It had been far enough for Danny. He pushed all of the buttons on the elevator. He didn't care what floor the elevator stopped on, he just wanted the elevator to stop and the doors to open.

The elevator suddenly and quickly stopped its descent. There was a long pause when nothing happened. The doors of the elevator then slowly opened. Danny lightly stepped out of the elevator.

Danny had not expected the sight before him. He was now in a large lobby and meeting area. It was especially surprising to him because the room went farther than the side of the building

of Tower A. Danny then realized, he must be in the main complex, which meant he was as low as the fourth floor. If he continued straight, he could reach the next tower. However, Danny didn't know if the next tower was Tower B or Tower D.

The elevator doors behind him closed. The sound of grinding metal continued as the elevator tried to continue its descent. Suddenly, a loud but dull bang echoed through the elevator shaft. The sound of grinding metal stopped. Danny knew the elevator couldn't have reached the first floor yet. He then heard the sound of a loud bell ringing. The elevator was stuck.

Danny realized how close he had come to getting trapped. He tried not to think about how long it would have taken someone to find him in the elevator. Danny wanted to get away from the elevator and this tower.

There was a large row of windows out toward the street. Danny went up to a window and looked out onto the street to check how high up he was. It was still pouring rain. He could see his bicycle in the rain. He could also see a street light that was still below him. Jumping through a window onto the street was not a choice.

Danny continued down the large meeting area until he came to five connected doors and a sign that said, “Now entering Tower B.”

Danny wasn't happy about going into Tower B, but he had no other choice. The majority of doors in the stair well of Tower A were locked and Danny was not stepping foot in another elevator. He opened the door and walked inside Tower B.

Confronting the Demon

Danny was surrounded by tables and chairs. He quickly realized this large room on the fourth floor of Tower B was a cafeteria. Up ahead, he saw a place where people would go down a line and pick up food. At the beginning of the line, Danny saw some trays still waiting for another person to come down to the cafeteria.

The tables and chairs were still precisely organized. The cafeteria was set up for another day of selling and serving food, but no one had eaten anything in this room for forty years. Danny then saw a place where the tables and chairs were no longer organized. Someone had actually created a small floor space by pushing the tables apart.

Danny pushed a few tables and chairs around so he could walk up to the open space. There was a large, red stain on the floor. He then saw a red stain on a table and chair next to him.

Next to these red stains were cards standing upright. Danny had seen this type of card on television before. It wasn't on *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*. It was on a detective show. Danny then realized he was looking at a crime scene.

Danny took a quick glance around the room. He saw a large broken window covered plastic. He also saw a sleeping bag over in a corner and a backpack with a peace sign on it close to the sleeping bag. Danny then remembered the biggest story that uncovered the Wallace Towers and its horrific past. Danny was looking at the place where three students were dared to spend the night. Danny was at the place where one of the students was murdered.

Danny backed away from the crime scene and walked to the sleeping bag and backpack in the corner to check them out. He was about to open the back pack when he saw a fire escape next to the broken window!

Danny tried to open the window that led to the fire escape, but it wouldn't open. He then pulled the plastic away from the window and looked down. He was still really high up. The

rain still came down in sheets from the sky, but at this point, Danny just wanted out of the building. He reached out and touched the rail of the fire escape. It was about a foot away from the broken window. He would have to climb onto the ledge of the window and grab the rail of the fire escape, then jump on to the outside of the fire escape and hoist himself over the rail.

Danny realized he could easily slip and end up like the student who died by falling to her death. He stepped back over to the window that would lead right to the fire escape if it would open. He pulled on the window, but it wouldn't move. He reached up and found a latch, but it was rusted tightly together. Danny didn't want to jump onto a wet, slippery fire escape, even if it was only a foot outside the open window.

Danny grabbed the back of a chair and looked around. He didn't see anything, so he swung the chair around and hit the window. The glass shattered and fell to the ground in front of him. He dropped the chair. He cut his hand on broken glass as he climbed out onto the fire escape. The rain washed away the blood from the small cut. Danny made his way down, but the fire escape quickly ended at the floor below.

There was a giant hole in the metal platform that Danny stood on. He looked through the hole at the ground and guessed that he was on the third floor. He then noticed a metal ladder on the ground and assumed that ladder at one point was part of the fire escape. Danny contemplated jumping. He didn't think he would die, but he knew jumping from this height would result in cuts, bruises, and possibly broken bones.

Danny looked at the building from the platform. Someone had broken through the window of this floor and climbed down. Since Danny had reached the third floor, he felt that much closer to escaping. So, he climbed in the broken window.

Danny found himself in a small white room with one door. The door was already open. Danny went inside and reached for a light switch. He didn't find a normal light switch, but found two buttons. Danny pulled out his cell phone and shined the light from the cell phone into the room, but the room was so large that the light didn't reflect off of anything. Without an alternative, Danny pushed the bottom button.

Danny heard the hum of electricity and the lights above him began to turn on. Danny stepped forward and found himself walking on some kind of metal that he could see through. Once the lights warmed up and brightened the room enough to see, Danny saw that he was on a catwalk. The ground was three stories below him. He then looked beyond the catwalk at a large metal beast. Danny recognized it. It was in the premiere of *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*. He was in the furnace room.

Danny's first instinct was to run, but he tried as hard as he could to put this out of his mind. He had made it to the heart of the Wallace Towers. It was his time to destroy all the evils that lived here. He could avenge his father's death. He could get rid of the source of so much wickedness.

Danny walked to a circle stair case and descended down to the ground floor. His eyes never left the metal box in front of him. With every step, the lights became brighter and brighter. Danny began to approach the furnace when he suddenly stopped and took a step back. The mangled remains of a black robe were at his feet. It was the robe that caused a cameraman to become possessed.

Danny needed to destroy this black robe. He looked around the room but didn't see any way of destroying it. Then, Danny saw a small flicker of light come from the bottom of the furnace. He bent down on his knee and looked into the furnace. There was a spark that flashed every five seconds.

Danny picked up a long piece of metal. He used the tip of the metal to pick up the black robe. He stuffed it into the furnace. He heard the sound of the spark a few times. Finally, he heard the black robe catch on fire. He pulled the black robe out with the long piece of metal and dropped it to the ground. It burned very slowly.

A light from above suddenly erupted. Sparks fell down to the ground on top of Danny, but he wasn't going to run. He was going to fight back! He swung the piece of metal and hit the furnace with all of his might. Sparks began to shoot out from the side of the furnace as the black robe continued to burn. Danny took another swing on the other side of the furnace. Each strike of metal against metal rang through the room.

Another light bulb blew up above Danny's head and sparks again began to fall. Danny swung the metal stick around and hit the top of the

furnace leaving a massive dent. He felt he was winning and destroying the beast, but Danny began to feel very weak. Before he could strike again, he suddenly couldn't see straight and began to wobble in place. He then heard voices inside his head.

“Stupid...wasted your life...,” Danny heard inside his head.

Danny then heard the sound of metal hitting metal again, but he hadn't made the sound. Another light bulb blew on the opposite side of the furnace and a loud metallic bang again rang through the room. Danny looked down at the black robe as voices began to fill his head again. The black robe wasn't on fire anymore.

“...you killed him...”

Danny tried to lift the metal stick, but he felt like he was about to pass out. Another loud bang rang through the room and Danny started to feel sick. He fell to his knees.

Voices continued to cloud his head as they said, “...die for nothing...”

Danny looked at the black robe. He felt ashamed that the Wallace Towers was destroying

him so easily. He knew if he became unconscious, like his father, he would never get back up again. He grabbed the robe with his last ounce of strength and quickly stuffed it and his entire arm inside the furnace. He heard the robe catch on fire again. He let go of the robe and fell back away from the furnace.

“...would anyone care...”

It was dying. He had beaten it. A fire grew quickly underneath the furnace. The banging continued as more lights exploded. Sparks showered down on to the floor.

The room quickly lost light. After a final bang and a final burst of sparks, the room was plunged back into silence and darkness. All that remained was the fire before Danny and a ray of light coming from beyond the furnace. Danny began to tip towards the ground. He couldn't lift his arms to catch himself. He knew he was done, but he felt comfort in the fact the ghosts and demons of this building would never hurt anyone again.

“...Danny!...”

Danny didn't feel the cold steel of the ground. Something had grabbed him. It was lifting him up and moving him. His feet dragged on the ground.

“Danny!” a voice again yelled inside his head.

Danny barely had the strength to lift his head. Above him he saw Mr. Curstmeyer, holding him close, dragging him out of the room.

“Danny, don't fall asleep!” Mr. Curstmeyer yelled.

Mr. Curstmeyer dragged Danny from one room to the next. He soon began to feel light headed, but then he saw a window. Mr. Curstmeyer dropped Danny, grabbed a typewriter, and flung it at the window shattering it to pieces. A metal grate still stood between Mr. Curstmeyer and the outside, but he didn't care. Mr. Curstmeyer grabbed Danny and smashed his head against the metal grate.

“Breathe! Breathe!” Mr. Curstmeyer ordered. “Breathe, damn it!”

Mr. Curstmeyer was losing energy as he saw a familiar tint of blue in Danny's face.

“This will not happen!” Mr. Curstmeyer screamed. “Not again!!”

Holding Danny with his left arm, Mr. Curstmeyer flung his right elbow against the metal grate. He hit it again and again. The metal grate cut through his clothes and into his arm. In one final strike, the grate became loose and fell outside. Mr. Curstmeyer lifted Danny out of the building and dropped him on the ground below. He then rolled himself over the window ledge and outside.

After falling to the ground, Mr. Curstmeyer crawled over to Danny and said, “Danny, just breathe. That's all you have to do.”

Danny could feel small drops of rain and the cool air filled with mist. A tiny breath of air filled Danny's lungs. He could feel it replenish him. His next breath was a little bigger and he felt that much better. Danny then took a giant breath of air and filled his lungs. He opened his eyes and looked up at Mr. Curstmeyer.

“Mr. Curstmeyer, what happened?” Danny asked.

Mr. Curstmeyer was ecstatic to see Danny breathing and more awake. “I thought you knew everything about this place,” Mr. Curstmeyer said jokingly.

Danny took a few more deep breathes and felt fifty times better. He began to sit up as he said, “What’s going on?”

“There’s a reason why everyone in this building went crazy,” Mr. Curstmeyer said as he helped Danny sit up. “

“How did I get outside?”

“Let’s get you up to the house so we can call your mom.”

Danny soon felt good enough to stand up with the help of Mr. Curstmeyer. The rain had slowed down to a trickle and Danny began to walk on his own.

Breathing

“Have a seat,” Mr. Curstmeyer authoritatively suggested. He pointed to a comfortable chair in his living room. Danny sat down, feeling exhausted and relieved to be out of Tower B.

“How did you find me?” Danny asked.

Mr. Curstmeyer disappeared into the kitchen. Danny could still hear him as he said, “Your mother called. She was worried you might show up here. Then I heard someone throw a rock at the steel foundation of the building through one of the crevices. Lots of kids have been doing that lately. I can easily hear it. It’s how I found you the last time. It shakes this house too.”

“Sorry, Mr. Curstmeyer,” Danny interrupted.

Mr. Curstmeyer reappeared from around the corner with a glass of water and a wash cloth. He

put the wash cloth on the cut in Danny's hand then said, "Drink some water."

Danny held the wash cloth against the cut. He tried to collect his thoughts when Mr. Curstmeyer asked, "How's your head?"

"I'm feeling a lot better and I'm not dizzy anymore," Danny said. He took the glass and took a big gulp of water.

Mr. Curstmeyer continued, "I went out to check the street and I saw your bicycle. I looked up at the towers and lights were turning on."

"What happened in that room?" Danny asked.

"Charles Wallace was an idiot. That's what happened," Mr. Curstmeyer said.

"Did something attack me or control me?"

"Danny," Mr. Curstmeyer said sincerely. "There are no evil demons or scary ghosts in the Wallace Towers. Something did attack you. It was carbon monoxide."

"The fumes that come from cars?"

“Yes, but in much larger quantities. That’s why people were freaking out in Tower B just before they shut it down. Charles Wallace had no clue how to build a massive building like this. Putting that furnace in the bottom floor of that large tower without any kind of ventilation was like putting everyone’s head in front of a car’s tail pipe. Carbon Monoxide started to rise up through the floor and soon everyone was acting strange, some even passed out.”

“Is that why the cameramen and Mr. Landers went crazy in the furnace room?” Danny asked.

“Those guys are as big of idiots as Charles Wallace. I saw one of them, a skinny guy with glasses, come around the side and turn the gas on to the building. The furnace hadn’t been on for forty years. That room must have been blazing. It will take months for the air in that room to be breathable.”

“What about Amy?”

Mr. Curstmeyer didn’t recognize the name and asked, “Who?”

“The woman in Theatre Sets?”

“Oh, Amy Lipska?” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “She did disappear from the Wallace Towers, but they found her a month later. She had run off and got married to someone in Pittsburg.”

“Wait. I saw her in Tower A.”

“I highly doubt that. I don’t think she ever came back to Davenport after she went and married that man.”

Danny asked, “You mean she’s still alive?”

“I wouldn’t see why not,” Mr. Curstmeyer said surprised. Mr. Curstmeyer suddenly became much more concerned as he asked, “How did you get from Tower A to the Furnace Room?”

Danny replied, “I took the elevator down to the fourth floor and...”

“You went in the elevator!?” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “Who cares about ghosts and demons? That was the scariest thing you’ve done tonight!”

“Why?”

“Those elevators are rusty and haven’t been checked. They probably haven’t even moved for forty years. You could have been killed!”

Mr. Curstmeyer’s front door quickly swung open. Mrs. Smith looked around the room and shouted, “Danny?”

Mrs. Smith saw Danny and quickly ran up to him. She put her arms around him and squeezed tightly. She never wanted to let go, but she also wanted to say something to his face.

Mrs. Smith pulled back. Still grabbing Danny’s arms with her hands, she said, “Why on earth would you come here and start wandering around by yourself?!”

“I wanted to destroy the towers,” Danny said. “They killed dad.”

“Danny, this building did not kill your father,” Mrs. Smith said. “He had a disease. It isn’t the type of disease that you can see or predict. Your father was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Epilepsy killed your dad.”

Danny wasn't satisfied with this answer, but remained silent knowing the answer would not change.

Mrs. Smith saw the cut in her son's hand. She looked into his eyes and sensed that something had been wrong. She said, "We should take you to the hospital."

"I feel fine mom," Danny said.

"We are still going to take you to the hospital."

"No!" Danny yelled as he stood up. "I want to see where my father died!"

"Danny, not now," Mrs. Smith said. She still held his arm in her hand.

"If epilepsy killed my dad, I want to see where it happened," Danny demanded.

Mrs. Smith looked over at Mr. Curstmeyer. The burden of Daniel Smith's death immediately showed on Mr. Curstmeyer's shoulders, but instead of retracting, Mr. Curstmeyer said, "it sounds like a reasonable request."

Even though she didn't want to, Mrs. Smith slowly let go of Danny's arm. She stood up and said, "Okay. We can go."

The Ventilation Room

Mr. Curstmeyer unlocked a large metal door a few steps away from his house. He swung the door open and walked into the Wallace Towers. Danny and Mrs. Smith followed close behind. All three of them were very quiet as they walked through the rooms to the ventilation room.

Mrs. Smith remembered making this walk eight years ago, just after her husband died. She had wanted to see the ventilation room too. She wasn't afraid eight years ago, but with Danny next to her, she found herself trembling at the thought that the towers might attempt to take her son too. Mrs. Smith then reached up and put her hand on her son's shoulders. She kept it there until she had been reassured several times that it was safe.

Mr. Curstmeyer, Danny, and Mrs. Smith had walked into a room without windows. Danny then asked, "Are there any ghosts that haunt these rooms, Mr. Curstmeyer?" Danny asked.

“Danny,” Mr. Curstmeyer replied. “There are no ghosts in Wallace Towers.”

Danny didn’t believe Mr. Curstmeyer. He had been in the Wallace Towers only for a short time and found plenty of evidence that ghosts haunted the building.

Danny became nervous as breeze pushed him forward. He saw a large, metal door on the ground. The doorframe looked like it had been beaten with a sledge hammer.

“Mr. Curstmeyer, is that the door?” Danny asked.

“Yes,” Mr. Curstmeyer replied. “I didn’t want what happened to your father to happen to anyone again.”

Mr. Curstmeyer, Danny, and Mrs. Smith entered the ventilation room. The lights did not turn on and the room was dark. The only light in the room came from the door they had just walked through. Mr. Curstmeyer and Mrs. Smith had seen the room before, so they stepped closer to the wall and let Danny venture into the room.

Danny looked up. The ceiling was high and metal tubes zigzagged all around. Danny could hear air moving through them. He looked at the dusty machinery sitting on the ground. It all looked in working condition, but none of it had been touched in years. He saw a metal table that looked heavy. He grabbed the side of the table, lifted it off the ground, and dropped it. The sound reverberated throughout the room. Danny looked up to see if anything had happened. After a few seconds, Danny went up to the lockers in the room and looked through them. Most of the contents of each locker had been cleared out, but Danny found a few things. One locker had a rag in it. Another one had a magazine clipping. Danny found some old clothes in another locker, and then Danny found a book.

Danny didn't look at what the book was called. He picked it up, stood a few feet away and threw the book at the lockers. The sound of the book hitting the metal lockers rang through the room. Danny looked up to see if anything had changed. Mr. Curstmeyer and Mrs. Smith were puzzled, but they remained silent. After a few seconds, Danny went over to the equipment and machinery. He found a hammer mixed in with the

other equipment. He picked it up and threw it as hard as he could at the lockers then looked around the room.

Danny was disappointed. He was looking for evidence. He was trying to prove Mr. Curstmeyer wrong by calling out the ghost that killed his father. Danny picked the hammer up, stood back from the lockers, and threw the hammer again as hard as he could.

“Danny,” Mrs. Smith said timidly. “Why are you doing that?”

“There is a ghost here. I know it!” Danny said still looking up for a sign. “Come out and show yourself!”

“Danny, there’s nothing here,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“What about the sixty people that are buried here?” Danny asked.

“That’s just what that television show said,” Mrs. Smith said. “It isn’t true. There aren’t sixty people underneath the Wallace Towers.”

“There is only one,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Danny turned away from his mom and Mr. Curstmeyer. He picked up the hammer and walked up to the lockers. He hit the lockers several times with the hammer as though he was hitting a nail. The sound was incredibly loud. After being convinced that he had created a sound that would wake up anything alive or dead, Danny stepped back away from the lockers and looked up. Again, nothing had happened.

“Come this way, Danny,” Mr. Curstmeyer said as he walked out of the ventilation room.

Mr. Curstmeyer took Danny and Mrs. Smith through a long hallway that led to some offices. Danny recognized the main entrance and the main lobby as the three passed it. Mr. Curstmeyer then led them deeper into the Wallace Towers, straight towards the middle of the complex. Danny was wondering if they were going to head back to Mr. Curstmeyer’s house in the center of the Wallace Towers when Mr. Curstmeyer walked up to a hatch in the ground. He unlocked a padlock and swung open the hatch. There was a flashlight and a set of stairs going down into the basement.

“Down this way,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Mr. Curstmeyer pointed the flashlight forward and walked down the stairs. Danny was right behind him when Mrs. Smith asked, “Where are we going Mr. Curstmeyer?”

“I’m giving Danny his proof,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

At the bottom of the flight of stairs, they had reached the steel foundation of the Wallace Towers. Danny remembered that *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* said the steel foundation could never be broken, never be lifted, and would remain there forever. Then Danny saw Mr. Curstmeyer go up to another hatch in the ground. He unlocked a padlock and swung open an opening in the steel foundation.

Mr. Curstmeyer continued down a circle staircase just under the hatch with Danny and Mrs. Smith close behind him. Danny saw the steel foundation in the walls that surrounded him, but they weren’t smooth like they were in the ground floor above him. They were rough and dripping.

“This shaft was put in by the Kingman Construction Company,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “They didn’t tell Charles Wallace about it. They knew he was doing something crazy.”

“Why are the walls dripping?” Mrs. Smith asked.

“They were pouring molten steel down onto the ground. The only thing they thought could withstand the heat from the steel was a shaft made of steel that was cold. The sides of the shaft melted from the heat, but it still stood.”

Danny counted twenty six steps before the staircase had ended. He was amazed that the steel underneath the towers was more than twenty-five feet deep.

Danny stepped off the staircase onto the ground. Danny noticed the ground had some give to it. He looked at Mr. Curstmeyer’s light on the ground. He was stepping on dirt, on earth. Mr. Curstmeyer then opened a door and flicked on a light. The roof and walls of the room were the steel foundation of the Wallace Towers. The roof quickly sloped down to the ground on the opposite side of the room. The only part of the room that wasn’t steel was the floor, which was dirt, but Danny saw a block on the ground that stood out.

Danny walked up to the cement block on the ground. It said, “Here lies Kurt Curstmeyer, Sr.

with our deepest sympathies to him and his family.”

“Charles Wallace brought me down here when I was fifteen,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“Who is this?” Danny asked confused.

“It’s my father, well, not exactly right there. My father is the only person still buried underneath the Wallace Towers.”

“But what about that newspaper article saying that sixty people were buried here?” Danny asked.

Mrs. Smith said, “You don’t think they willingly left all those people here, do you?”

“They stopped construction as soon as they saw that people were in the ground,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “They dug everyone up except for my father. They couldn’t find him. After the building was complete, Charles Wallace apologized and said I could come down here as often as I wanted. I’ve come here about every month since.”

“You come down here that often?” Danny asked.

“He’s the only family I’ve ever known,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “My mother died just after I was born. I don’t have any brothers or sisters.”

“Is that why you don’t want the Wallace Towers to come down?” Mrs. Smith asked.

“It’s also my home now,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “It’s the only home I have.”

Mr. Curstmeyer looked around the room. He recalled all the times he visited his father underneath this giant steel beast. He was ashamed of himself for having fallen so far from a great career as a pianist. He remembered how Charles Wallace forced the dwindling and decaying Wallace Towers on him then disappeared. He may have considered the Wallace Towers to be a curse, but it was one of the few things he had left.

“This isn’t right, Mr. Curstmeyer,” Mrs. Smith said. “This is no way for you to live.”

“I don’t have a choice,” Mr. Curstmeyer said. “I can’t make my father go through the demolition of this building. If people would just go away, then everything would be fine.”

“But that’s the problem,” Danny said. “People aren’t going to go away. This place is famous and spooky.”

“You are always going to have trespassers,” Mrs. Smith said. “Isn’t there anything else that can be done with this place?”

“Didn’t Henry Wallace want this to be a cemetery?” Danny asked.

Danny jumped and Mrs. Smith screamed a little when they heard a shuffle come from up the stairs.

“We need to go, now!” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Danny was the first one up the stairs quickly followed by Mrs. Smith and Mr. Curstmeyer. Danny crawled out of the hatch and steel foundation when he heard a familiar voice. He looked up the next stair case and saw a light coming down the stairs. It was David Landers and his crew.

Danny heard David Landers say “...which could not necessarily be destroyed, but other things could be developed here. In any case, paranormal

activity is concentrated within the steel that supports the entire building because just on the other side is the decaying remains of those who were buried here.”

Mrs. Smith and Mr. Curstmeyer came up through the hatch. Mr. Curstmeyer quickly threw down the door and locked the hatch with the padlock.

David Landers and crew were startled by the noise and turned around. David said, “No! Don’t close the door! That was going to be a great episode!”

“Go away! There are no stories here!” Mr. Curstmeyer demanded.

David Landers and crew finished descending the stairs and walked over to Mr. Curstmeyer. The cameramen were still filming as David Landers said, “Do you realize how long we have been looking for a way to get through the steel foundation, to get to the very bottom of the towers?”

“You can’t get down there,” Danny said.

“Padlocks are easily broken,” Larry said from behind his cameramen. “But there is something that would keep us from going down there for now. Mr. Curstmeyer, you could give us an interview.”

Mr. Curstmeyer quickly realized he would not be able to guard this hatch forever. This television show would eventually disrupt his father’s resting place and turn it into a circus act.

“I will give you an interview upstairs if you get out of here right now,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

David Landers was thrilled. He said, “Alright, everyone upstairs!”

Chapter 29

The Interview

David Landers casually walked with Mr. Curstmeyer, Mrs. Smith, and Danny to the main entrance and lobby of the Wallace Towers as the remaining crew rushed back to their van to get the equipment ready for an interview. By the time David Landers reached the lobby, the film crew had set up chairs, lights, and a tripod for the camera and was ready to shoot.

“Please sit down, Mr. Curstmeyer,” David Landers said. Mr. Curstmeyer reluctantly took his seat and the interview quickly began.

“Thank you for giving us this interview today Mr. Curstmeyer,” David Landers said. Mr. Curstmeyer did not reply.

“First, could you tell us how you came about owning the Wallace Towers?”

“Charles Wallace cursed me with it,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

Mr. Curstmeyer obviously didn't care to elaborate, so David Landers asked, "Could you tell us how Charles Wallace cursed you with it?"

"My father owned a grave site here before the towers were built. When the towers were crumbling and all of the businesses moved out, Charles Wallace found some records indicating that my father owned the land before he inherited it. Therefore, I should be the one to inherit the property, not Charles. He shoved the deed into my hands then disappeared."

"But how were you cursed with them?" David Landers asked.

"Because it's taken everything I have including my career, my friends, and my family," Mr. Curstmeyer said.

"Then don't you think the towers should be destroyed?" David Landers asked.

Mr. Curstmeyer looked up at the cameras, the lights, and the people who used his biggest weakness as a way of making money by showing it to the world. He didn't want his father's grave site to be at the bottom of a massive demolition, but Mr. Curstmeyer thought a onetime disruption

would be better than the constant exposure and spectacle this television show would bring. They may have promised to stay away from his father's grave site for now, but he knew they would eventually go down there.

“Yes. The Wallace Towers will be destroyed,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“Wait, wait, wait,” David Landers said as he motioned the cameramen to stop filming. Brad and Bill turned off the blinding lights as David Landers continued, “Why are you changing your story?”

Mr. Curstmeyer was confused. He said, “I'm agreeing with you.”

Larry, the producer, came out from behind the cameras and said, “We don't want you to agree with us! If the towers come down, we won't have a show!”

Danny came to the aid of Mr. Curstmeyer and said, “But you've been following him and constantly demanding that the towers come down!”

Larry changed his tone of voice as he addressed Danny. Unfortunately Larry sounded like he was talking with a seven year old child instead of a fourteen year old young man. “Yes we have been demanding that the towers come down,” he said. “It has given us spectacular ratings. We would like those ratings to continue. Don’t you and your friends love to watch this show?”

“Not anymore,” Danny said.

“I guess the interview is over,” Mr. Curstmeyer said as he stood up from the chair. He motioned for Danny and Mrs. Smith to follow him outside.

“If that’s all the interview we get, then we are going down through those hatches!” David Landers shouted.

Mr. Curstmeyer turned around and said, “Fine, but every newspaper in the morning is going to have a headline saying the Wallace Towers are coming down.”

Danny also yelled back, “It would be kind of pointless to watch a show about a building that doesn’t exist anymore.”

The Series Finale

Danny was shocked that a new *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers* was going to be on. The show hadn't had a new episode in over a year.

It was Thursday night and Danny was in the activity room waiting for the show to start. A part of him didn't want to watch it but it had been such a significant part of his life that he felt compelled to give it a shot.

Now that Danny knew there were never any ghosts inside the Wallace Towers, he was ready to laugh at the flashes of light and scary opening of the show, but he was surprised when David Landers was on the screen peacefully walking across a large patch of grass.

David Landers said, "On this peacefully ground, there once was a large building with four towers. It was the most evil place in the world. Now it is the most peaceful place I know. It is

truly a place where people can find rest. This once was a nightmare created by Charles Wallace, but it is now the dream of his father, Henry Wallace. The Wallace Towers are now Wallace Cemetery.”

The title of the show, *The Ghosts of Wallace Towers*, came on the screen with peaceful music playing in the background. David Landers continued to walk through the grass away from the camera.

Danny received a text message from his mom saying, “Come downstairs soon.”

The mayor of Davenport came on the screen and said, “We are very happy to offer this peaceful and vital place to our community. Our loved ones now have a place to be buried and this surrounding community now has an opportunity to again flourish outside the dark shadow of the complex that once stood here.”

Mrs. Smith yelled from downstairs, “Danny, Mr. Curstmeyer will be here in a couple minutes!”

“Okay!” Danny replied.

David Landers again came on the screen and said, “After the towers were demolished and the

ruble was cleared away, the city still had a massive slab of steel they could not break. So, instead of trying to get rid of the steel, they brought in tons and tons of dirt and soil and buried the steel foundation. The ground is now thirty feet higher than it used to be.”

Dr. Mickelson came on the screen and said, “Once the owner of the property, Mr. Kurt Curstmeyer, came forward and agreed to anything the city would want to do, the city of Davenport made him a fair offer. In exchange for demolishing the Wallace Towers, the city would own the property. The city would then own the cemetery that they would build. The city of Davenport could then earn back all the funds from the project by selling grave sites. Mr. Curstmeyer would not leave empty handed though. The city was going to build him a small house in the middle of the property just as Henry Wallace envisioned. But since the city also knew of Mr. Curstmeyer’s talent as a concert pianist, they built a steel platform up from the steel foundation of the Wallace Towers where they put a grand piano.”

David Landers was standing underneath a tree in front of a beautiful white house. The wind blew gently through the tree and David Landers

could be seen enjoying the fresh air as he said, “Behind me is Mr. Curstmeyer’s new home. Inside, there is a grand piano on top of a steel platform. Whenever this piano is played, the sound reverberates through the steel foundation and can be heard throughout the cemetery. There are also a few steel rods placed throughout the cemetery where anyone can put there ear up to it and hear what is being played.”

David Landers walked up to a piece of steel not too far away and put a microphone up against it. The slight sound of beautifully played piano music came from the screen, but this was disrupted by piano music that wasn’t played very well coming from downstairs.

Danny climbed down the stairs and saw Mr. Curstmeyer in his chair with his mom at the piano. His mom was playing a song when she hit a bad note.

“Claire?” Mr. Curstmeyer said. Danny was still thankful he wasn’t on the piano stool anymore.

“Hi, Danny,” Mrs. Smith said.

“Greetings, Danny,” Mr. Curstmeyer said.

“Hi, Mr. Curstmeyer!”

“I have three requests for your services this week,” Mr. Curstmeyer said as he passed Danny a piece of paper with names, addresses, and phone numbers.

“Doesn’t anyone else in this town know how to tune a piano?” Danny said with frustration.

Danny went into the kitchen to call the numbers as Mrs. Smith and Mr. Curstmeyer continued her lesson.