

Middle Grade Fiction
Mystery Adventure/Fantasy
Ages 8-12

A-MAZE-ING MYSTERY ADVENTURES 1:

The Invisible Realm

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From Chapter 1: Wet Dishrags

CRASH... THUMP... BANG!

“W-what was that?” Dacey cried.

Hattie shrugged. “Ghost, goblin; who knows. We’ll figure it out when we get up there. Let’s find some flashlights.”

Of course, now she had to figure out where they should look for flashlights. Maybe a living room or kitchen drawer? Or the pantry, or possibly the back porch.

She checked the porch, but all she saw were boxes waiting to be unpacked. She moved back to the living room, Dacey watching her, and checked inside the end tables on either side of the sofa; empty.

Hattie harrumphed. “You going to help?”

“I don’t know where to look.”

Hattie squashed her retort and pointed towards the kitchen.

“Check the pantry while I search the counter drawers.”

“Already did; pantry’s empty.”

Hattie ignored her and rummaged through each of the drawers next to the sink until she found two small flashlights and a bunch of different sized batteries. She tossed one flashlight to her stepsister and stuffed a package of batteries in her pants pocket.

“Ready?”

Dacey swallowed. “But the spiders—.”

“Maybe bats or lizards have already eaten all the spiders.”

“B-bats? Lizards?” Dacey blanched.

“Move it, kid; we’re wasting time.”

WOO-OOO—THUNK...

“Don’t be such a baby—it’s just wind.”

Dacey appeared nailed to the floor, so Hattie yanked her sleeve and dragged her towards the stairwell. She flipped the wall switch next to the railing; a flicker of light sparked, then the old bulb at the top of the stairs sputtered to life, adding an eerie reddish glow to light their way.

“Aren’t you scared?”

Hattie sighed heavily. “Wind in a chimney can’t hurt us.” I hope, she added to herself, and crossed her fingers behind her back. “But I’ll go first, just to make sure the steps are safe.”

Shadows popped at her from the cracked plaster wall. A wind gust hit the outside of the cottage above their heads, filtering through unseen cracks in the attic door, which coaxed the old lightbulb into a lopsided sway. In turn, the shadows wavered, then merged into faces.

At least that’s what they look like, Hattie mused.

“What are those spots?” Dacey asked, indicating the wall.

“These?” Hattie pointed at the faces. “They’re shadows.”

“They look like ghosts. I don’t like ghosts.”

“They’re not ghosts; it’s just the light moving because of the wind.”

Hattie swallowed against her own uneasiness. The shadows did look like ghosts, one of which only had a head, the other pointing to the top of the stairs.

She walked back down to where her stepsister waited. “Okay, kid; stairs are fine. Let’s go.”

Dacey hesitated.

Hattie prodded her forward with her flashlight. “Come on, kid—we have treasure to find, and your cat to rescue.”

Slowly, the girls crept up the stairs, closer and closer to the top, their own shadows dancing along the walls. For several long minutes, all you could hear was the soft squish of Hattie's sneakers.

Another cool draft escaped from beneath the attic door. Arms tingling, Hattie stared at the looming X of the door's beams.

Creaking stairs, whistling wind, and strange noises... a runaway cat and a bad storm... she'd wanted adventure, and this certainly qualified. It was almost as if she was some sort of detective. And if other detectives could find missing people, secret passages, and criminals, then she, Hattie Edwards, could find a fat, furry cat, even in the dark, and discover what riches an old attic might hold.

"What if there really are ghosts up there?" Dacey whispered.

Hattie shuddered. Her stepsister's words echoed in her head as she held the doorknob and twisted.