

Chapter 1: Night Terror

JJ glanced down at her speedometer; she was driving twenty miles per hour over the speed limit. There were only a few other cars on the street at three in the morning, but that was no excuse. She lifted her foot and let the car slow, but she couldn't calm her racing heartbeat.

Her tires screeched as she took the turn too fast before hitting the brakes and bouncing her SUV into the driveway. She turned off the engine and raced up the walkway, and Bailey Hope opened the door before JJ even rang the bell. Her eyes filled with fearful tears and her voice cracked as she tried to explain what was going on in their house. JJ had only one question: "Where is Addison?"

She hurried up the stairs and found Bailey's husband and son standing at the top, faces uncertain as they tried to figure out how to deal with the young girl's nightmare. Every light in the house was on, as if they thought it would scare away the ghost.

"Let me talk to her. Everything is going to be okay." JJ gave them a tight half smile before going into Addison's room. The lights were on, and the covers lay on the floor. She picked them up and threw them onto the bed before getting on her knees and looking underneath. Nothing. "Addison, it's JJ. Please talk to me."

The door to the closet slowly opened with a screech that sent chills up JJ's spine. There Addison sat on the floor, hugging her legs against her chest. Her puffy red eyes and runny nose caused JJ's heart to race even faster.

JJ handed her tissue before sitting on the floor beside her. The teen wiped her nose, but she continued to sob uncontrollably. JJ pulled her into her arms and held her tight. "Everything is going to be okay. I promise."

They stayed huddled together in that position for ten minutes. Every time Bailey or her husband, Ted, came into the room to check on them, JJ waved at them to leave. The young medium had had some type of paranormal encounter with a spirit, and only another medium could help.

"Are you ready to talk?" JJ finally whispered, pushing Addison's long hair away from her face.

Addison nodded. Together, they left the closet and she sat next to JJ on the bed. The girl took a deep breath, hoping the extra oxygen would calm her nerves. "There's been a spirit hanging around me at school. I sensed it in the hallway and then again when I was running on the track."

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JJ picked up a bottle of water sitting on the bedside table and waited while the girl took several sips. “Did the spirit harm you?” she asked in a calm voice, hoping for the best.

“No, but I don’t understand what it wants,” Addison said, her voice cracking. The young medium had always assumed being able to speak to the dead made her a bad person. As hard as JJ had tried to show her what a gift it was, Addison still couldn’t see it as a positive.

“Well, that is what we need to figure out. Did it communicate any messages?”

“The feeling I got scared me . . . I don’t want to be a medium.” Tears rolled down her face and splashed onto JJ’s hand.

“I felt the same way, but in time, you will realize what an amazing gift you have.” She gave Addison’s hand a squeeze. “Close your eyes and think back. Did the spirit give you any messages?”

“I’m not sure. I smelled grass.”

“During PE on the track?”

“No, I was standing by my locker, which is why it seemed so strange.”

“Actually, I smelled grass the second I walked through your bedroom door. It’s powerful when spirits use scents to communicate, so that must be an important clue. What else?”

Addison opened her eyes and wiped her tears on her nightgown.

“JJ, maybe she’s too upset to talk about this right now,” Bailey said, coming into the room.

JJ pulled Addison into her arms again. “Listen to me. This spirit found you because it knows you can speak to the dead. I can teach you how to communicate with it, *and* how to shut spirits out when you need to.”

“Will it hurt me like that one did to you in Oregon?” Addison’s eyes were wide open with fear.

Just three months ago, an angry spirit had harmed JJ while she was on a photography trip in Oregon. Sometimes, when a person dies in a traumatic way, their spirit stays connected to the location of their death. In Oregon, such a spirit had taken out its anger on JJ, causing both physical and emotional injuries. After learning about the unusual situation, Addison began to fear her abilities even more. JJ had tried to reassure her about how rare that type of encounter was, but clearly the young medium continued to carry those fears.

“No!” JJ answered confidently. “When I first came into the room, the spirit was still here. I sensed she was envious, not angry.”

“She?”

“Yes, I’m confident the spirit is female.”

“Tell her to leave me alone,” Addison said, raising her voice.

“I did. She won’t be back tonight, but we will have to communicate with her and find out why she’s stuck at your high school.” JJ turned to face Bailey and Ted. “The spirit won’t go away without our help.”

“I don’t know . . . Addison is so upset.” Bailey’s eyes were filled with worry, but she recognized she was way out of her league. When she had adopted her late sister’s daughter, she knew the girl could speak to the dead and had also witnessed JJ interact with spirits, but she couldn’t possibly comprehend what it was like to have a spirit sending words and images into your mind.

“If it were possible for me to do this without her, you know I would. The spirit has attached itself to Addison for a reason. Our first step is to figure out why,” JJ said, standing up.

Addison jumped to her feet. “Please, Mom and Dad. Let me work with JJ. I need to do this!”

The parents glanced at each other. After a moment, they shrugged their shoulders. “Okay, but you need to tell JJ everything that happens. *Every* message and *every* time you sense something strange, even if you aren’t sure that it is a spirit. Got it?” Bailey ordered, grasping Addison’s arm.

“I promise.”

“And JJ, you will inform us if this becomes too much for her,” Ted added, not liking what he was seeing.

“Of course. Anything else?” JJ asked.

Ted and Bailey glanced at each other before shaking their heads.

“Okay, I’ll see you at Luke’s Bistro tomorrow after school,” she said to Addison. “Now, how about we all get some sleep?” JJ walked toward the bedroom door to leave. When she turned around, Bailey and Ted were hugging their adoptive daughter. *They make a nice family*, she thought.