

The **Disney**
Haunted Mansion

STORM

&

SHADE

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CHAPTER

ONE

New Orleans is said to be the most haunted city in the United States. If you wander through the French Quarter, you might even see signs advertising houses for sale that specify “haunted” or “not haunted.” The wise would do well to limit their options to those not haunted.

But not everyone wishes to be wise.

(It’s safer, but it’s not quite as interesting, is it?)

The truth is that New Orleans *is* the most haunted city in the United States, but even if every ghost in town departed at once except for the spirits that inhabit just one particular building . . . New Orleans would *still* be the most haunted. Because the one building of which we speak is the Haunted Mansion, home to more ghosts, ghouls, spirits, and haints than almost the entire rest of the world put together.

Why? There's no one answer. The mortal families who attempted to dwell within the mansion have always abandoned it within a year or two . . . or a month or two . . . or, occasionally, only an hour or two. But abandon it they inevitably did, whether in terror, in mourning, or in hearses. When they try to describe what they witnessed, what they felt, words fail them completely. (Assuming they can still speak. Some of them can only weep, or scream, for a very long time afterward.)

At first glance—a stolen look, perhaps, from the gates that offer passage through the brick walls that surround the estate—the mansion doesn't appear so very different from other great houses in New Orleans: the tall white columns at the front of the house, the cast-iron fence, the glint of candlelight behind its windows at night. Then you ask yourself why candles are burning in an abandoned house. Don't panic! The glow you see isn't fire, exactly. It's something far stranger.

The fates of those who have chosen to enter the mansion vary widely. Some left with their hair gone white from fright. Some never left at all. The example of one girl's destiny after her decision to explore the Haunted Mansion may serve as a lesson about the very nature of fear itself. . . .

CHAPTER

TWO

“M aybe there's still time to stop this.”
Audrey Perez sat on the edge of the
psychiatrist's couch, her entire body tense.

Her mind raced as she tried to think of some way—any way—out of her current problem. It didn't matter that her mind had been dealing with this issue for months now, ever since the beginning of summer, or that she'd already thought up a thousand potential solutions that hadn't gone anywhere. There had to be some way out that hadn't yet come to her but would if she worked hard enough.

“Maybe . . . maybe I could talk to my parents about home-schooling again,” she continued. “This time I'd do my research first. I could give them more options, counter some of their arguments.”

Doctor Ron gave her a look over the rims of his reading glasses. “Your parents still work outside the house, though, don’t they?”

There wasn’t much way to be homeschooled if nobody was home. Audrey tried again: “One of them could work remotely, maybe. Tons more offices allow it now, right?”

“Yes, but not every job can be done remotely, and not every office is open to telework when it’s not absolutely necessary.” *Telework?* Doctor Ron tried to keep current but sometimes fell short. “Also, if your parents were putting in enough effort to homeschool you, they probably wouldn’t have time to do their jobs at all.”

“Still. I could ask.”

“You could,” Doctor Ron said. He was constantly, soothingly calm, which was one of the things Audrey liked best about him, but when his voice took on this slow, gentle tone, she knew he was trying to buffer bad news. “But you said that your parents went over this with you pretty thoroughly the first time. Do you have any reason to think they’ve become more receptive to the idea?”

Audrey slumped back onto the couch. “No. They’re convinced this move is the greatest thing that’s ever happened to me. Ooooh, a fancy school in New Orleans. All-girls schools provide a better learning environment. School uniforms mean nobody gets bullied for what they wear. Blah blah blah.” She

folded her arms across her chest. “It’s that last one that gets me. Great, so nobody will bully me for what I’m wearing—instead, they’ll bully me for something else! Uniforms stimulate creative bullying. This is what they’re calling the ‘bright side.’”

Doctor Ron laughed. She liked it when he thought she was funny, even though he never let that distract them for long. “You had hardships at your old school, though, didn’t you? It certainly wasn’t perfect.”

“No,” she admitted. “But I had Chase there with me. And I knew what I was dealing with. Here I won’t know.”

“What if you’re ready for it?”

“What if I’m not?”



The Perez family wouldn’t move into the new house in New Orleans until that weekend. But everything was already upended into chaos: posters, paintings, and clocks had been taken down from the walls; stacks of boxes lined every hallway and room; and paper plates took the place of the glass ones that had already been packed.

Audrey’s home—the only one she’d ever known—was already gone.

“A fifteen-minute commute,” Mom said dreamily, never glancing down at the box she was packing (labeled in