

TUNNEL OF BONES

VICTORIA SCHWAB



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who are filming their TV show about the world's haunted cities,
Cassidy Blake (who can see ghosts) and her friend Jacob (who is a ghost)
are alert for trouble, especially when the filming takes them into the
underground Catacombs, the empire of the dead, where Cassidy accidentally
awakens a powerful poltergeist spirit—one whose mystery she must solve
before his power is unleashed on the whole city.

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CHAPTER ONE

The train rattles as it moves beneath the city.

Shadows rush past the windows, little more than streaks of movement, dark on dark. I can feel the ebb and flow of the Veil, the drumbeat of ghosts on every side.

“Well, that’s a pleasant thought,” says my best friend, Jacob, shoving his hands into his pockets.

“Scaredy-cat,” I whisper back, as if I’m not also creeped out by the presence of so many spirits.

Speaking of cats, Grim scowls up at me from the cat carrier in my lap, his green eyes promising revenge for his current imprisonment. Mom and Dad sit across from us with their luggage. There’s a map of the Metro above their heads, but it just looks like a tangle of colored lines: more like a maze than a guide. I went to New York City with my parents once, and we rode the subway every day, and I still couldn’t tell where we were going.

And that time, everything was in English.

Jacob leans against the wall beside me, and I look out the window again. I study my reflection in the glass—messy brown hair, brown eyes, round face, and the old-fashioned camera around my neck—but the space next to me, where Jacob should be, is empty.

I guess I should explain: Jacob is what he likes to call “corporeally challenged.” Basically, he’s a ghost. No one can see him, except for me. (And a girl we just met named Lara, but that’s only because she’s like me, or I’m like her, someone who’s crossed the line between the living and the dead, and made it back.) If it seems strange, the whole dead-best-friend thing, well, it is, but it’s not the strangest thing in my life by far.

My name is Cassidy Blake, and one year ago, I almost drowned. Jacob saved my life, and ever since, I’ve been able to cross into the Veil, a place filled with the spirits of the restless dead. It’s my job to send them on.

Jacob scowls at that. “Your job, according to *Lara*.”

I forgot to mention that Jacob can read my mind. Apparently that’s what happens when a ghost pulls a human back from the brink of death—things get kind of tangled up. And if being haunted by a psychic dead boy isn’t weird

enough, the only reason we're here on this train is that my parents are filming a reality TV show about the world's most haunted cities.

See?

The fact that Jacob is a ghost is starting to seem normal.

"*Paranormal*," he says with a crooked grin.

I roll my eyes as the train slows, and a voice on the intercom announces the station.

"Concorde."

"That's us," says Mom, bouncing to her feet.

The train pulls to a stop and we get off, making our way through the crowds of people. I'm relieved when Dad takes Grim's carrier—that cat is heavier than he looks—and we haul ourselves and our suitcases up the stairs.

When we reach the street, I stop, breathless not from the climb but from the sight in front of me. We're standing at the edge of a *massive* square. A circle, really, surrounded by pale stone buildings that reflect the late-afternoon light. Gold trim shines on every surface, from the sidewalk rails to lampposts, fountains to balconies, and in the distance, the Eiffel Tower rises like a steel spear.

Mom spreads her arms, as if she can catch the whole city in one giant hug.

“Welcome to Paris.”

You might think a city is a city is a city.

But you’d be wrong. We came from Edinburgh, Scotland, a nest of heavy stones and narrow roads, the kind of place that always feels cast in shadow.

But Paris?

Paris is sprawling and elegant and bright.

Now that we’re aboveground, the drumbeat of ghosts has receded, and the Veil is just a light touch against my skin, a flicker of gray at the edge of my sight. Maybe Paris isn’t as haunted as Edinburgh is. Maybe—

But we wouldn’t *be* here if that were true.

My parents don’t follow fairy tales.

They follow ghost stories.

“This way,” says Dad, and we set off down a broad avenue called Rue de Rivoli, a street lined with fancy shops on one side and trees on the other.

People bustle past us in chic suits and high heels. Two

teenagers lean against a wall: The guy has his hands in the pockets of his black skinny jeans, and the girl wears a silk shirt with a bow at her throat, looking like she stepped straight off a fashion site. We pass by another girl in glittering ballet flats and a boy in a striped polo shirt walking a poodle. Even the *dogs* are perfectly styled and groomed here.

I look down at myself, feeling suddenly underdressed in my purple T-shirt, my gray stretchy pants, and my sneakers.

Jacob only has one look: His blond hair is always tousled, his superhero T-shirt always creased, his dark jeans worn through at the knees, and his shoes so scuffed I can't tell what color they used to be.

Jacob shrugs. "I do me," he says, clearly unbothered.

But it's easy not to care what other people think when none of them can *see* you.

I lift my camera and peer through the cracked viewfinder at the Paris sidewalk. The camera is an old manual, loaded with black-and-white film. It was vintage even before we both took a plunge into an icy river back home in upstate New York. And then, in Scotland, the camera got thrown

against a tombstone, and the lens shattered. A very nice lady in a photo shop gave me a replacement, but the new lens has a swirl, like a thumbprint, in the middle of the glass—just one more imperfection to add to the list.

What makes the camera truly special, though, is how it works *beyond* the Veil: It captures a piece of the other side. It doesn't see as well as *I* do, but it definitely sees more than it should. A shadow of the shadow world.

I'm just lowering the camera when my phone chimes in my pocket.

It's a text from Lara.

Lara Chowdhury and I crossed paths back in Edinburgh. We're the same age, but it's safe to say she's years ahead in the whole ghost-hunting department. It helps that she spends her summers hanging out with the spirit of her dead uncle, who happens—*happened*—to know about all things supernatural. *He* wasn't an in-betweener (that's what Lara calls people like us), just a man with a large library and a morbid hobby.

Lara:

Gotten yourself in trouble yet?

Me:

Define trouble.

Lara:
Cassidy Blake.

I can practically hear the annoyance in her posh English accent.

Me:
I just got here.
Give me a little credit.

Lara:
That isn't an answer.

I lift the phone, make a goofy grin, and snap a photo of myself giving a thumbs-up on the crowded street. Jacob's in the frame, but of course he doesn't show up in the photo.

Me:
Jacob and I say hi.

"*You* say hi," he grumbles, reading over my shoulder. "I have nothing to say to *her*."

Right on cue, Lara snaps back with her own reply.

Lara:
Tell the ghost to move along.

"Ah, here we are," says Mom, nodding at a hotel just ahead. I tuck my phone back in my pocket and look up.

The entrance is ornate—beveled glass, a rug on the curb, and a marquee announcing the name: HOTEL VALEUR. A man in a suit holds open the door, and we step through.

Some places just scream haunted . . . but this isn't one of them.

We move through a large polished lobby, all marble and gold. There are columns, and bouquets of flowers, and a silver beverage cart stacked with china cups. It feels like a fancy department store, and we stand there, two parents, a girl, a cat, and a ghost, all of us so obviously, thoroughly, out of place.

“*Bienvenue*,” says the woman at the front desk, her eyes flicking from us to our luggage to the black cat in his carrier.

“Hello,” says Mom cheerfully, and the clerk switches to English.

“Welcome to the Hotel Valeur. Have you stayed with us before?”

“No,” says Dad. “This is our first time in Paris.”

“Oh?” The woman arches a dark eyebrow. “What brings you to our city?”