

Goosebumps
**HOUSE OF
SHIVERS**

SCARIEST. BOOK. EVER.

R.L. STINE

SCHOLASTIC INC.

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Goosebumps book series created by Parachute Press, Inc.
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ISBN 978-1-339-01498-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

23 24 25 26 27

Printed in the U.S.A. 40
First printing 2023



“PLEASE DON’T LEAVE US!”

Uncle Wendell loved to make up strange and frightening stories. So when he told my sister Betty and me about the scariest book ever written, we didn’t believe him.

We knew he was trying to scare us. We were onto him. We only pretended to shiver and shudder.

Of course, we *should* have believed him about the Scariest Book Ever.

Because that story about the book was true.

The truth is, Betty and I didn’t want to stay with Uncle Wendell. As we made the long drive to his house, even Bellamy, our dog, was barking unhappily in the back-seat beside us.

Bellamy is a five-year-old shepherd-terrier mix, and he’s usually an angel in the car. But he knew something was up. He knew we were heading somewhere new and strange. So he didn’t stop yapping.

We had been driving for hours. Trees whirred by in a green blur outside the car window. We were racing past some kind of forest.

“Mom, listen,” I said. I leaned forward in my seat behind her and tapped her shoulder.

“Stop tapping me, Billy,” she said. “You’re like a woodpecker. You’ve been tapping me the whole drive.”

“That’s because I’m trying to get through to you,” I said.

“You two have made your point,” Dad growled, hunched over the steering wheel. “But you don’t have a point. The only point is on the tops of your heads!”

Dad was a stand-up comic before he went into real estate. And he still thinks he’s funny.

“We know you’re anxious about staying with your uncle Wendell,” Mom said.

“Anxious?” Betty cried. “We’re not anxious. We don’t want to stay with a total stranger for two weeks.”

“Not so loud,” Dad muttered.

“I can’t help it. I was born with a loud voice,” Betty replied. Betty is tough. She never lets Dad have the last word. And she never pretends to laugh at his jokes like I do.

My sister and I are twins. Billy and Betty, the Arnold

twins. Dad always tells people we're identical twins. And that doesn't even begin to be funny. We don't even look alike. She's tall and thin and I'm at least four inches shorter.

Twins are supposed to be close to one another, and we get along okay. Of course, everything isn't perfect. Mom told Betty she was ten minutes older than me. So she thinks she's the boss. The big sister.

I don't know why Mom had to tell her that. If I was ten minutes older, I wouldn't make such a big deal about it.

I was still leaning over Mom. The car hit a bump in the road, and it sent me sailing back into my seat.

Dad laughed. "This is a thrill ride," he said, watching me in the rearview mirror.

I growled. "You know I hate roller coasters."

"Everybody, simmer down," Mom said.

"Billy and I are simmered *up*," Betty said. "You said Uncle Wendell is a weird one. I heard you saying that to Dad. So why are we staying with him?"

"He was the only person who could take you both for two weeks," Mom said. "We have no other family. We've been over this, haven't we?"

“You two are *both* weird ones,” Dad said, a grin on his face. “So you’ll get along fine.”

Betty rubbed Bellamy’s belly, and he rolled onto his back and stopped yapping for a while. Betty is his favorite. When I rub his belly, he tries to bite me.

I had to sneeze. I tried to hold it in. But a loud blast escaped my nose and mouth.

“Billy, cover your nose,” Dad said.

“There wasn’t time,” I told him. “You know I always sneeze when I’m tense or upset.”

“Think you could try to outgrow that habit?” Dad asked.

“Why can’t we go to London with you?” I demanded for the hundredth time.

Dad groaned. “I told you, Billy. It’s a business trip. Not a family vacation.”

“The two weeks will fly by,” Mom said. She turned in her seat. “Can I just talk seriously to you for two minutes?”

“Okay. We’ll grant you permission,” Betty replied. Sometimes she acts like she’s a queen or something.

“I know you have no memory of Wendell,” Mom said. “He saw you when you were babies. But I think you’re really going to like him. He—”

“You said he was weird,” I said, “and his house sits all by itself in a forest with no one around for miles.”

“You are going to *love* his old house,” Dad chimed in. “And it isn’t just *any* forest. It’s called the Wayward Forest.”

Betty rolled her eyes. “Huh? Wayward? Why do they call it that?”

“Beats me,” Dad said. He swerved to miss a hole in the road.

“You didn’t let me finish,” Mom said, reaching for a water bottle. “You two like to read. You’re both bookworms.”

“Ugh,” Betty groaned. “Why do we have to be worms?”

“Well, Wendell has an amazing collection of books,” Mom said. “I think you will go nuts when you explore his library.”

“Yeah. Nuts,” I repeated sarcastically.

“And his house is filled with wild gadgets and strange objects he has found all over the world,” Mom added. “The house is like a museum.”

“Awesome. I always wanted to live in a museum,” I muttered.

Dad slapped his hand on the steering wheel. “Bad

attitude!” he shouted. “Both of you. Bad attitude! You should be open to new experiences.”

“I don’t want experiences,” I said. “I just want to stay with someone I know.”

“I’ll bet when we come to pick you up in two weeks, you won’t want to leave,” Mom said.

It was my turn to roll my eyes. I wanted to say: *“How much do you want to bet?”*

But I didn’t say it.

An hour later, Dad gripped the steering wheel tightly in both hands. He gritted his teeth. “I think we’re totally lost. Mom and I are going to miss our flight,” he said.

Mom patted his arm. “We’ll be okay. I’m sure we’re close to Wendell’s house.”

We had swung off the highway. The dirt roads through the forest twisted and curved through the trees, and Dad got turned around twice.

“We’re making a circle,” he said. “I remember that pile of rocks.”

“Go straight. Go straight.” Mom pointed out the windshield. “I think we’re okay.”

Dad shook his head. “I—I was counting on the navigation system to get us there.”

The GPS had gone out as soon as we turned off the highway.

“Yaaaay!” I cried. “Does this mean we get to go to London with you?”

“Be quiet, Billy!” Dad shouted. “You’re not helpful at all.”

I sank back in my seat. Betty stared out the window. “We can’t be lost,” she said. “People don’t get lost anymore, do they?”

“No. We’re not,” Mom said. “Look! I think that’s Wendell’s house. I see it back in the trees.”

Dad mopped the sweat off his forehead with one hand. “Whew. Lucky the house is so tall. Whoa. Look at it. Rising high above the treetops.”

The car bumped into a small clearing. Dad turned into a long, pebbly driveway that led past a grassy front lawn up to the house.

Now I could see the house clearly. It wasn’t shaped like a house. It rose straight up like a tower. A solid black tower. The afternoon sunlight didn’t reflect off it. It made me think of blackboard slate.

I could see a narrow door. A row of tiny windows along the front of the house.

“Is it a house or a fort?” Betty asked.

Mom and Dad didn’t answer. They were already

standing in the driveway, pulling our suitcases from the trunk.

Bellamy scratched his paws against the window. It had been a long drive for the poor guy. I could see he was desperate to get out.

I grabbed his leash, pushed open the door, and slid my feet to the ground. Bellamy wagged his tail happily and tried to tug me toward the woods.

The sun hung low over the forest, and the air felt cool and fresh. Birds trilled and whooped, as if greeting us.

Dad checked the time on his phone. “Whoa. We are so late. We really have to hurry.”

He carried our suitcases to the front door and dropped them. He pushed the brass doorbell.

Betty and I hung back, waiting for Uncle Wendell to appear. What did he look like? I had no memory of him.

With an impatient sigh, Dad pushed the doorbell again. Silence.

No Uncle Wendell.

Dad pounded his fist on the door.

“I’ll bet he went into town to buy groceries,” Mom said. “He asked for a list of all the food you two like.”

Dad shook his head. “We can’t wait here. We’ll miss

our flight.” He mopped sweat off his forehead. “I’m so sorry, but we have to go. Everything will be fine. I’m sure Wendell will be back any minute.”

He grabbed Mom’s arm and started to pull her to the car.

“You’re just going to leave us here?” I called after them.

“Apologize to Wendell for us,” Mom said. “Tell him we didn’t want to miss our plane.”

She bent to pet the dog. “Take good care of Bellamy,” she said. “And have fun. Text us as soon as Wendell arrives so we know you’re okay.”

They climbed into the car and closed the doors. We watched them back down the driveway and roar away, the pebbles flying from under the tires.

I opened my mouth in a loud sneeze. You can guess I was a little tense.

I wiped my nose with my sleeve and pushed the doorbell again.

No answer.

Suddenly, Bellamy began tugging us away from the door, pulling hard on his leash. The dog opened his jaws and began to howl.

Betty and I gazed up at the strange black house. The late afternoon sunlight glinted off its tiny windows.

Bellamy howled louder.

“What’s wrong with him?” Betty asked. “Does he know something we don’t know?”