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TWELVE-YEAR-OLD EMMA Bryant knew she should be in her ballet/modern dance class rather than here in the Haunted Museum. Not that the other students would miss her — those perfect girls with their perfect dancing form.

Emma recalled her last dance class and cringed. During her attempt to plié, she'd crashed into Elizabeth McGowen, the best dancer in class. Knocking Elizabeth back had resulted in the

entire group behind their star dancer toppling over. Emma knew her face had blazed red under the angry looks the other girls had cast her way as they helped one another up.

No, taking off from dance class was not what she should have been doing right now. Emma figured she needed all the practice she could get.

But this trip to the Haunted Museum was how her best friend, Keera Kramer, wanted to spend her twelfth birthday, so how could she not go?

Keera had been waiting to visit the Haunted Museum since the girls had been in the second grade. Her parents had said it was too frightening, but they'd finally relented and were allowing Keera to hold her party there.

"Man, they *really* don't want you to touch their stuff, do they?" Keera leaned in close to Emma to comment. DO NOT TOUCH signs were hanging everywhere.