

# the Fear Zone

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“Hey, give that back!” I yelp.

Andres grins, which looks really creepy since he’s wearing fake vampire fangs for Halloween. He doesn’t hand back the folded piece of orange paper he’s snatched from my locker—instead he takes a step back and waves it while other costumed kids walk down the hall around us. He’s been my best friend since sixth grade, and even now, two years later, he sometimes acts like my little brother. My very annoying little brother.

Andres starts opening the folded letter.

“Come on, give it back.”

Andres shakes his head, still smiling, unfolding the note slowly.

Honestly, I have no idea what the note is, and I don't want Andres to be the first to find out. Maybe it's from a friend telling me about a last-minute Halloween party. Or maybe it's from my archnemesis, Caroline, telling me I look ugly in my black cat costume. It wouldn't surprise me. She's gone from good friend to enemy ever since last year.

I feebly snatch at the paper one more time, but Andres dances back a step. The page is almost entirely unfolded now.

He reads it to himself. His smile slips.

"What is this?" he asks. "Some sort of joke?"

He turns the paper over, and I read what's written in messy paint on the other side.

**MEET IN THE GRAVEYARD.  
TONIGHT. MIDNIGHT.  
OR ELSE.**

"Huh?" I ask. I grab for the paper again. This time he lets me have it. "Who wrote this?"

Andres shrugs and leans against the locker beside mine.

“Maybe it’s a prank?” he says.

I keep rereading the note. I don’t recognize the handwriting. It’s not Caroline’s, that’s for sure. I don’t think I have any other enemies at Jackson Middle School.

Do I?

I want to crumple up the letter, but when I look at it again, chills race down my spine. Those two words: *Or else.*

Or else *what?*

“It has to be a prank,” I reply. “A Halloween scare. I bet some kids from the high school are going to be there to scare us or something.”

It wouldn’t surprise me. Kids in our town love Halloween, and I’ve heard a bunch of stories about high school kids taking the scares too far. Dressing up as monsters and running after little kids. Throwing pumpkins on cars. Apparently, years ago, a kid even went missing while playing hide-and-seek in the graveyard, and wasn’t found until the next morning.

I shudder and crumple the note, tossing it in a

nearby trash can. Whatever this is, I don't want any part in it.

"Come on," I say. I shut my locker and zip up my bag. "Let's go. I think Mom finally brought all the Halloween candy out of hiding."

"You had me at *candy*," Andres says. He takes my arm, and together we walk down the hall and out of the school. But no matter how loudly we talk about other things, I'm haunted by the feeling:

Someone wants me to be at the graveyard.

At midnight.

Someone wants me to be afraid.