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The Show Must Go On! (You're Invited To A Creepover)



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Synopsis

Becca Hart has secretly wanted to act on stage for as long as she could rememberÃ¢â ¬â •it's all she ever thinks about. Determined to make her dream come true Becca tries out for this year's school play, The Last Sleepover, and gets the starring role! After a few creepy incidents on set and persistent nightmares at home, Becca quickly learns that this is no ordinary school play. Is it stage fright? Or is the play haunted?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A lifelong night owl, P.J. Night often works furiously into the wee hours of the morning, writing down spooky tales and dreaming up new stories of the supernatural and otherworldly. Although P.J.Ã¢â ¬â„¢s whereabouts are unknown at this time, we suspect the author lives in a drafty, old mansion where the floorboards creak when no one is there and the flickering candlelight creates shadows that creep along the walls. We truly wish we could tell you more, but weÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve been sworn to keep P.J.Ã¢â ¬â„¢s identity a secretÃ¢â ¬Â¦and itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s a secret we will take to our graves!

CHAPTER 1 PRESENT DAY . . . Felix Gomez shoved aside a rack of hanging costumes and looked around backstage in the auditorium of Thomas Jefferson Middle School. He had been the drama teacher at the school for a few years now, and he really wanted to do something different this year. He would put on a new play, he decided, not just the same old, same old. Tasked with

revitalizing the schoolÃ¢â ¬â„¢s sagging theater program, he had spent weeks reading new plays, but so far nothing had grabbed him. Then it startedÃ¢â ¬â •an inexplicable urge, at first vague, then specifically focused on the backstage area of the schoolÃ¢â ¬â„¢s auditorium. Gomez had no idea why he was drawn back there, but somehow he knew that the obsessed, panicky state of mind that had gripped him for days now could only be eased by searching there. In a dark corner, buried under long-discarded props and scenery, Gomez spotted an old steamer trunk. He knew instantly that this was what had been calling out to him, driving his obsession. Throwing open the trunk, his handÃ¢â ¬â •feeling as if it were being controlled by some other forceÃ¢â ¬â •reached in. He pushed aside old props and grasped a stack of pages, bound together by three rusted metal fasteners. Blowing off a cloud of dust from the top, Gomez read the title of the play. The Last Sleepover. He slammed the lid of the truck and sat down in the dim light to read the play. It looked like it had been typed on a typewriter. Ã¢â ¬Å“This is it!Ã¢â ¬Â• he said to himself before he had read a single word. Ã¢â ¬Å“I know it. This the play I have been looking for!Ã¢â ¬Â• But as Gomez read the play, the force that had driven him here battled with a new feeling, one of inexplicable anxiety and horror. The more he read, the more intense the feeling of dread grew. Somewhere deep inside, he knew there was something wrong with the play. Ã¢â ¬Å“No. This isnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t right,Ã¢â ¬Â• he muttered to himself, staring at the script, fighting the urge that had been driving him. Ã¢â ¬Å“I canÃ¢â ¬â„¢t do it. I wonÃ¢â ¬â„¢t put on this play.Ã¢â ¬Â• Gomez stood and hurried to the trunk to put the play back where heÃ¢â ¬â„¢d found it. Feeling a sudden sharp pain in his ankle, he tripped over a low stool that he was certain had not been there a moment before. He crashed to the ground and clutched his right leg in pain. Bree Hart paced up and down the center aisle of the Thomas Jefferson Middle School auditorium and nervously twirled her curly dark hair around her finger. The meeting for students interested in auditioning for this yearÃ¢â ¬â„¢s play was about to begin. The auditorium was filled with energized students, busily chatting, eager to know what the play would be about. Bree had never felt this way before. She was equal parts excited and terrified. Ã¢â ¬Å“Trying to wear a hole through the carpet?Ã¢â ¬Â• asked someone from behind Bree. She spun around to face her best friend, Melissa Hwang. Ã¢â ¬Å“Oh, Lis, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m so glad you came,Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree said, hugging her friend. Ã¢â ¬Å“IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m so nervous!Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“I told you I would come,Ã¢â ¬Â• Melissa replied. Ã¢â ¬Å“You think youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re the only one who wants to be in the play?Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“I canÃ¢â ¬â„¢t believe the time is here!Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree exclaimed. Ã¢â ¬Å“IÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve dreamed about acting for as long as I can remember, but IÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve never had the guts to actually audition for anything.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Good for you, Bree,Ã¢â ¬Â• Melissa said. Ã¢â ¬Å“You donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t want to spend the

rest of your life living in MeganÃ¢ ¬â„¢s shadow, do you?Ã¢ ¬Â• Bree thought about her older sister, Megan, who had gotten the lead in every school play since the third grade. Melissa was right. It was time for Bree to take center stage. Ã¢ ¬Å“I wonder whatÃ¢ ¬â„¢s keeping Mr. Gomez,Ã¢ ¬Â• Bree said. Ã¢ ¬Å“He was supposed to be here, like, ten minutes ago.Ã¢ ¬Â• Ã¢ ¬Å“Anxious to begin your new life in the theater?Ã¢ ¬Â• Melissa quipped.
Ã¢ ¬Å“Something like that, yeah.Ã¢ ¬Â• Just then the auditorium door swung open. Ã¢ ¬Å“And here he is,Ã¢ ¬Â• Melissa said. But instead of Mr. Gomez, a tall woman strode slowly down the center aisle, carrying a large briefcase. As she passed, Bree noticed the dark circles around her eyes and her jet-black hair. Ã¢ ¬Å“WhoÃ¢ ¬â„¢s that?Ã¢ ¬Â• Bree whispered to Melissa. Melissa shrugged. The woman climbed the steps to the stage and walked out to the center. Adjusting the single microphone that had been set up for the auditions, she spoke in a surprisingly pleasant and gentle voice. Ã¢ ¬Å“Ladies and gentlemen, if I may have your attention please,Ã¢ ¬Â• the woman began. Ã¢ ¬Å“My name is Ms. Hollows. Unfortunately, Mr. Gomez had an accident yesterday afternoon. He broke his leg and will not be able to direct the play. I will be your substitute drama teacher for the next few weeks, and I will be directing this yearÃ¢ ¬â„¢s play.Ã¢ ¬Â• A buzz went through the crowd. Mr. Gomez was one of the most popular teachers at the schoolÃ¢ ¬â •many of the students sitting in the auditorium that afternoon were there because of him. Bree could hear the sighs of disappointment throughout the room. Ã¢ ¬Å“I was really looking forward to working with Mr. Gomez,Ã¢ ¬Â• she moaned. Ã¢ ¬Å“Me too,Ã¢ ¬Â• Melissa concurred. Having given the students a moment to digest this unexpected bit of news, Ms. Hollows continued. Ã¢ ¬Å“The play I have selected for us to perform is called The Last Sleepover.Ã¢ ¬Â• Ms. Hollows opened her briefcase and pulled out a thick stack of papers. Ã¢ ¬Å“I have copies of the play for those interested in auditioning,Ã¢ ¬Â• she said, placing the pile onto a stool next to where she stood. Ã¢ ¬Å“Please form a line and come up and take a copy. You are to read the play this weekend and decide which role you would like to audition for. Auditions will be held after school on Monday. I will see you then.Ã¢ ¬Â• One by one the students walked onto the stage, each taking a copy of the play. Bree felt a thrill run through her when she turned and looked out into the sea of empty seats in the auditorium. She pictured herself in the lead role, standing before a cheering crowd, taking her bows, curtain call after curtain call. Ã¢ ¬Å“Are you all right, Gabrielle?Ã¢ ¬Â• someone asked, startling Bree back to reality. Ã¢ ¬Å“Oh, yes, sorry, Ms. Hollows,Ã¢ ¬Â• Bree said sheepishly as she picked up a copy of the play and hurried off the stage. Only after she left the stage did Bree realize that she had never told Ms. Hollows her name, especially not her real name. Everyone, except her mother sometimes, called Gabrielle Hart by her

nickname, Bree. How did she know? Bree wondered. Ã¢â ¬Å“Weird,Ã¢â ¬Â• she said under her breath. Ã¢â ¬Å“WhatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s weird?Ã¢â ¬Â• Melissa asked, falling into step with Bree. Ã¢â ¬Å“Somehow Ms. Hollows knows my name already,Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree replied. Ã¢â ¬Å“And not just my nickname. My real name. No one ever guesses that Bree is short for Gabrielle.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Well, you are one of the top students in the school,Ã¢â ¬Â• Melissa pointed out. Ã¢â ¬Å“Maybe she did some research about who she might want in the play.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Yeah, maybe,Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree replied, not really believing what Melissa had just said. Ã¢â ¬Å“Anyway, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll see you later, Lis.Ã¢â ¬Â• Melissa waved as she ran toward her bus. Ã¢â ¬Å“Bye.Ã¢â ¬Â• Later that evening Bree curled up in a big, overstuffed chair in her living room and opened the script. Ã¢â ¬Å“The Last Sleepover,Ã¢â ¬Â• she read aloud. Ã¢â ¬Å“By M. P. Wormhouse.Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree read on. The play told the story of a house haunted by the ghost of a girl who had always wanted to attend a sleepover. As Bree got further and further into the script, she began to read aloud: Ã¢â ¬Å“(CARRIEÃ¢â ¬â„¢S BEDROOM IN HER NEW HOUSE. THE HOUSE IS AN OLD VICTORIAN THAT IS BEING REMODELED AND HAS AN ABANDONED, HAUNTED FEEL TO IT. THE TWO OTHER GIRLS WHO HAVE GATHERED AT THE SLEEPOVER ARE HUDDLED AROUND CARRIE. CARRIE SITS IN THE MIDDLE, WITH HER BLACK CAT ON HER LAP.) CARRIE: Thanks for coming tonight. Ready to hear something creepy? RACHEL (EXCITED): Awesome! LAURA (NERVOUS): What? (CARRIE LEANS IN CLOSE TO THE GIRLS TO TELL THEM HER SECRET.) CARRIE: Years ago, a girl named Millie lived in this house. She was a shy girl who kept to herself most of the time. Although she didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t have a lot of friends, the thing she wanted most in the world was to be invited to a sleepover. She dreamed about hanging out all night in her pajamas, in a sleeping bag, telling stories, eating, laughing . . . RACHEL: Having pillow fights. CARRIE: Having pillow fights. All the cool stuff weÃ¢â ¬â„¢re doing tonight. Anyway, Millie waited and waited until finally a girl named Gabby had a sleepover. Gabby invited every girl in her classÃ¢â ¬â •every girl, that is, except Millie. RACHEL: Mean! LAURA: Poor Millie. CARRIE: I know. Gabby was a bit of a bully. Millie begged her to be allowed to come to the sleepover, but every time she asked, Gabby said no. RACHEL: Why? CARRIE: I donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t know, but that sleepover was only the first of many. At least twice a year, Gabby had a huge sleepover, and each time all the girls in the class were invited except Millie. Then Millie got sick. Very sick. In time she died, having never gotten her wish to attend a sleepover. LAURA: That is so sad! RACHEL: It is. But where does the creepy part come in? CARRIE: IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m getting there. MillieÃ¢â ¬â„¢s family moved shortly after her death and sold this house to another family. That family had a little girl. One night, that girl had a sleepover. And thatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s when the haunting

began. Lights flickered on and off, and a strange face appeared outside her bedroom window. RACHEL: Yeah, right. YouÃ¢â ¬â„¢re making this up. CARRIE: IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m not. Promise. I heard the whole story from the old woman who lives next door. She remembers Millie. They went to school together a very long time ago. LAURA: Creepy. CARRIE: It gets creepier. Every girl who has had a sleepover in this house since Millie died has experienced the same things. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s said that MillieÃ¢â ¬â„¢s ghost haunts this house and will keep haunting it until she is allowed into a sleepover! RACHEL: Well, sheÃ¢â ¬â„¢s not getting into this one! CARRIE: Nope. Not if I have anything to say about it. (LIGHTS GO OUT ALL OF A SUDDEN. GIRLS SCREAM WITH FEAR.)Ã¢â ¬Â• As Bree continued to read the play, she began to get more and more creeped out. Ã¢â ¬Å“This play is so dark . . . and thereÃ¢â ¬â„¢s something else I canÃ¢â ¬â„¢t quite put my finger on,Ã¢â ¬Â• she murmured to herself when she had finished reading. She set the script aside. Ã¢â ¬Å“I wish Ms. Hollows was putting on a happy play, with singing or something. Maybe I should wait to audition next year.Ã¢â ¬Â• But that didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t make Bree feel any better either. Bree recalled her English teacher describing the feeling of being outside your comfort zone. That the best way to learn and grow was to do something that felt difficult or unfamiliar. Maybe this was the play for her, and maybe she was destined to play Carrie. Ã¢â ¬Å“Whatcha got there?Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Oh, hey, Megan,Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree said absentmindedly, not bothering to look up at her sister. Ã¢â ¬Å“ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s a copy of the play weÃ¢â ¬â„¢re putting on this year.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Are you seriously thinking of auditioning?Ã¢â ¬Â• Megan asked, unable to stifle a giggle. Ã¢â ¬Å“The shy, fly-on-the-wall, always-stay-in-background Bree wants to step into the spotlight?Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“YouÃ¢â ¬â„¢re always such a drama queen, Megan,Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree replied. Ã¢â ¬Å“ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s just a play. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s just an audition. Are you nervous that you arenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t the only one in this family with acting talent?Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Okay, okay, donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t get all riled up,Ã¢â ¬Â• Megan shot back. Ã¢â ¬Å“IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m just teasing you. So, whatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s the play about?Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree described the strange story of The Last Sleepover to her sister. Ã¢â ¬Å“Sounds creepy,Ã¢â ¬Â• Megan said when Bree had finished recounting the plot. Ã¢â ¬Å“It really is,Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree said, hoping to get MeganÃ¢â ¬â„¢s advice about acting. Ã¢â ¬Å“Just reading it gives me a really weird feeling. Have you ever been in a play like this? You know, where it just gets under your skin?Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“ThatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s nuts,Ã¢â ¬Â• Megan replied with a laugh. Ã¢â ¬Å“ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s just a play. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s just acting, you know, make-believe. I hate to break it to you, but there is no such thing as the boogeyman, or ghosts, or other silly stuff like that. You know what I think?Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Enlighten me,Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree said. Ã¢â ¬Å“ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s nerves,Ã¢â ¬Â• Megan said. Ã¢â ¬Å“You might just not be cut out for the

stage.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Thanks for the sisterly advice!Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree shouted as her sister left the room. Just when she thought Megan might be of help, she acted like, well, like Megan. Ã¢â ¬Å“You know what I think? I think you just donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t want to share the spotlight with me. Well, guess what? I am auditioning and I will get the lead!Ã¢â ¬Â• Bree picked up the script and stormed off to her room. She would show Megan! But that night, as Bree drifted off to sleep, she had to admit to herself that she did feel nervous. She couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t shake the haunting presence of the play and its characters. They felt so real, as if they had entered her life, not as words on a written page but as real people, including a very real-seeming ghost. She spent the night, tossing and turning, her dreams blending with her waking thoughts. It was the first of many restless nights. Ã Â© 2011 Simon & Schuster

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