



## CHAPTER ONE

Amy staggered into her friend Leah's front hall, loaded up with all her sleepover stuff.

"Wow, are you staying for a week?" joked Rosie, Leah's mum, as Amy put it all down.

"Hi, Amy!" cried Leah, rushing in from the stable yard and pulling off her boots.

"Gosh, what a lot of jumpers!"

Amy grinned at the pile on the floor.

"Mum insisted. She says it'll be chilly in the barn overnight."

"She's right," said Rosie. "Are you sure you girls wouldn't rather sleep in the house?"

“No way!” cried Leah. “Sleeping out is much more fun. Oooh, what’s in there?”

Amy took the lid off the big round tin she was clutching, to reveal a dozen cupcakes with stars sprinkled on top.

“Wow!” gasped Leah.

“They look delicious,” Rosie said.

Just then, Leah’s little brother, Adam, came down the stairs. “Hey, are those for me?” he asked cheekily, without even saying hello.

He marched up and tried to reach into the tin, but Leah pushed his hand away. “Get out, pig! These are for our sleepover!”



“I’ll put them in the kitchen,” Rosie told Amy. “Leah, don’t forget you’ve still got chores to finish on the yard.”

“I’ll give you a hand,” said Amy.

As they made their way across to the stables, Leah’s dog, Rufus, bounded over to join them. Amy ruffled his brown shaggy fur as he jumped up at her.

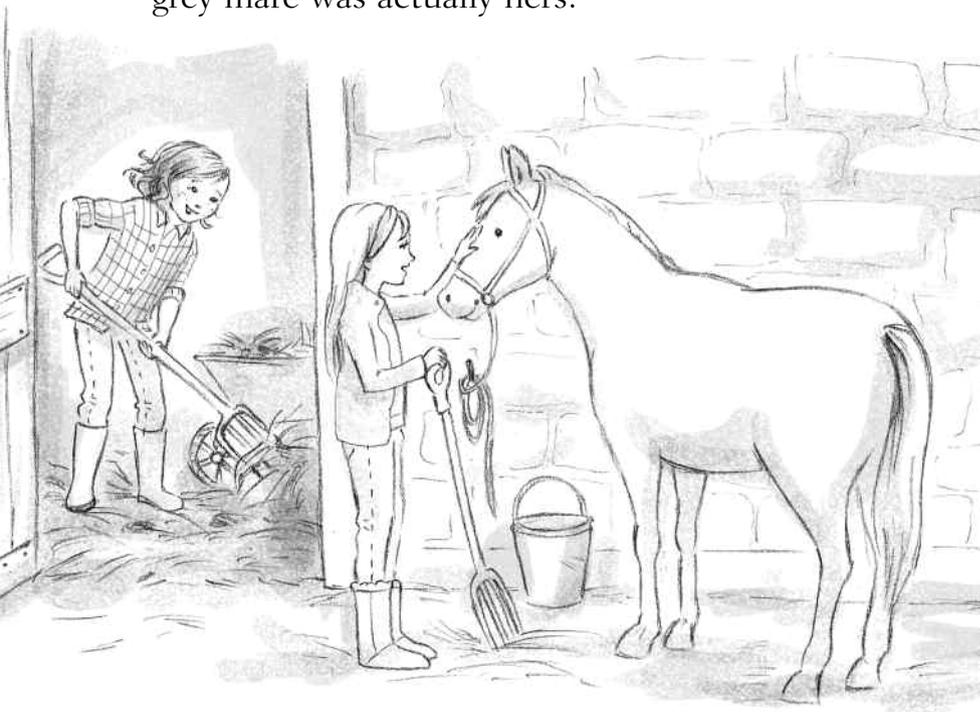
“Down, boy!” said Leah firmly. Of course, Rufus took absolutely no notice. “How is your getting-a-dog campaign going?” she asked Amy.

Amy shrugged. “I’ve mentioned it a few times, but Mum’s so busy with the builders she hardly has time to think about anything else. The B&B opens in six weeks, so she’s in a mad rush to get everything finished. And once it’s all perfect, she’s even less likely to want a dog jumping all over things...”

“Hmm, tricky,” said Leah. She grabbed the wheelbarrow that was leaning up against

the side of the tack room and loaded two forks on to it. Then she and Amy went over to Nutmeg and Gracie's stables.

Amy gave Gracie a pat and stroke as she led her out and tied her up by the door, and Gracie nudged her affectionately with her muzzle. Amy had ridden the pony in her last lesson and she was already mad about her. As she and Leah mucked out the stables, Amy could almost pretend that the gentle grey mare was actually hers.



“I can’t wait till we can go out on hacks together,” she told Leah. “I’ve got the hang of rising trot now, and I hope I’ll get a go at canter soon.”

“You’re doing really well,” said Leah. “Mum says you’re a natural.”

Amy blushed, but couldn’t help grinning. “Thanks. I’ve dreamed of riding all my life – it’s amazing that I’m actually getting the chance to learn. Honestly, you don’t know how lucky you are living at a stables!”

“Yeah, cos I get to do this all day!” Leah joked, holding up a forkful of pony poo.

Leah’s dad, Dan, and her big brother, George, came out to help them finish off the evening chores. When everything was done, the girls headed back in to gather up their things for the sleepover.

“Don’t forget those yummy cakes!” said Leah, as they went into the kitchen.

“How about we each have one now? We deserve it after all that mucking out!”

“Definitely,” Amy agreed, pulling off the lid of the cake tin. “Hey, there are two missing!”

“Adam! I should have known he’d do something like this!” Leah cried. “Wait till I get my hands on him! No, hang on...” she said, with a cheeky grin. “I’ve got a better idea.”

Amy giggled as Leah reached up to the spice rack on the wall and took down a jar of chilli flakes. “I like your thinking!”

Leah got out a butter knife and carefully lifted the icing on one of the cakes just enough to hide a sprinkling of chilli flakes beneath it. Then she left it temptingly on the counter.

The girls made a flask of hot chocolate and were searching the kitchen cupboards for snacks when Rosie came in and put the

kettle on. “Oh, Amy, I forgot to ask,” she said, as she took a mug from the drainer, “how was your Easter weekend?”

“Great, thanks,” said Amy. “I spent it with Dad in London. It was lovely to have four whole days together. We went to see a new exhibition at the Tate Modern. Dad’s really into art, like me.”

“Well, you’re in good company in White Horse Bay,” said Rosie. She gestured to a print on the wall. “Samuel Trevelyan lived in this area. That picture is of White Horse Beach.”

Amy had a long look at the painting. “There’s my favourite spot on the sand to sit and sketch,” she told them, pointing it out. “And look, Leah, isn’t that the part of the cliffs where we rescued Jester, the stranded dog?”

Leah peered at the picture, too. “Oh, yeah. I’ve never really looked at it properly before.”

“I’ve heard of Samuel Trevelyan,” Amy said to Rosie. “Dad and I went to an exhibition of sea paintings last year. I think I saw a picture of his there.”

Just then, Adam appeared, looking very pleased with himself. Leah and Amy were careful to act as if they didn’t know anything about the stolen cakes. Rosie sent him to get ready for bed and they pretended not to notice as he swiped the cupcake off the counter on his way out.



Dan and George came in from the yard then and started raiding the cupboards for snacks, too.

“Hey, we bagsied the Jaffa Cakes!” Leah cried, snatching the box back from George.

“Never mind,” said Dan, handing him a packet of chocolate digestives, “we’ll have to make do with these.”

“You only had tea two hours ago!” Rosie sighed. Then they heard a loud yell from upstairs. Leah and Amy burst into giggles. “What’s going on?” asked Rosie suspiciously.

“Ask Adam!” Leah smirked. “Come on, Amy, let’s go and set up camp!”

Before long, the girls were snuggled in their sleeping bags (and three jumpers each) on bales of hay in the barn. Tiger, the old farm cat, purred softly beside them. They scoffed all the cakes and biscuits as they chatted, and soon it was pitch-dark apart from the security lights shining in

the yard. Dan came to check on them at about eleven o'clock, just before he and Rosie went off to bed.

"I hope you girls are going to get some sleep..." he began.

"Course we are," said Leah. "Definitely some. A few minutes' worth at least!"

Dan raised his eyebrows. "Goodnight, Amy," he said, "and you, Trouble."

The girls grinned and said goodnight.

As he headed back to the house, Leah whispered, "Do you want to hear a ghost story? I know one that'll scare your socks off."



"What, all four pairs of them?" Amy joked. Her heart was already racing, though. She wasn't great with ghost stories as it was, and out in the open, in the middle of the night...

But Leah had started, and there was no stopping her. "There's a creepy old manor house set on a hill high above White Horse Bay..." she began. Slowly, the story of the Victorian lady of Greystone Manor, who was terrible to everyone – her servants, children and even her pets – began to unfold.

"She fell down the stairs and died, but with her last breath she vowed never to allow anyone to enjoy the house again. And she's haunted it to this day," Leah breathed. "A family did move in, the Mallorys, and stayed for quite a few years, but bad luck befell them at every turn. The daughter moved to Australia to get as far away as possible from the place and the husband

died a mysterious death. The wife was eventually driven out by the ghost, who passed her on the staircase every day and appeared each night by her bed to terrify her out of her wits. Now the manor is a ruin..."

Amy shuddered. "Oh, that's horrible!"

"Yeah, really terrifying!" Leah whispered, her voice full of excitement. "Wouldn't it be amazing if someone could get a photo of the ghost, and actually prove the story was true?"

Amy felt her stomach flip. "Oh no, Leah—" she began.

But Leah was off, chatting away about a ghost hunt. "Another mystery for us to investigate!" she cried. "It'll be a fantastic adventure."

"Hmm," said Amy. To her it sounded exactly the opposite.

"Your phone takes photos, doesn't it?" Leah asked eagerly.

Amy nodded. "But, Leah, I don't—"

"Then we can go straight from here tomorrow morning," Leah went on. "You've already cleared it with your mum to spend the day here, haven't you?"

Amy nodded reluctantly.

"Great. We can tell Mum we're just taking Nutmeg for a hack. I think he's got a lesson first thing, but we can set off straight after that. And you can ride my bike..."

In the end Amy agreed to go up to Greystone Manor the next day, just to get Leah off the subject of ghosts. A little later Leah dropped off to sleep, but poor Amy lay awake for ages, listening to the unfamiliar noises around them and jumping every time a gate rattled in the wind. Eventually, she pulled the sleeping bag right up over her head and finally managed to fall asleep.