

CHAPTER ONE

Salem

Salem is a beautiful American town in Massachusetts, USA. Naumkeag, "City of Peace", is its Indian name. But it is also called the "Witch City" because of the witch hangings of 1692. There are seven historical witch museums in Salem. They all have a lot of information on the witches and hangings of 1692.

Kelly and Megan Connor are two sisters. They come from San Francisco, California. The Connor family now lives in Salem because Mr Connor teaches French at the University of Boston.

Kelly is fourteen and Megan is thirteen. They go to Salem Middle School and they like it. Kelly has red hair and blue eyes. She's tall and plays basketball for the school team.

Megan has fair hair and blue eyes. She is a champion swimmer. She is a member of the Salem Swimming Team.

It's Friday, October 28, and Halloween is on Monday, October 31. Kelly and Megan are very excited because they love Halloween. This is their first Halloween in Salem, the "Witch City."

"I think about Halloween all the time," says Megan.

"Me too!" says Kelly.

"We must buy a pumpkin and make a jack o'lantern," says their mother. "Now finish your breakfast. It's late! School starts in twenty minutes."

The girls eat their eggs and drink their milk. Then they go upstairs to brush their teeth. They're ready at quarter past eight.

"Goodbye, mom! Don't forget to buy the pumpkin!"

"OK! Goodbye girls!"

Kelly and Megan always walk to school. They meet their friends Susan Garcia, Nick Lee and Bill Goldberg.

"I'm so excited about Halloween," says Susan. Susan is Hispano-American. She is 13 years old and has long black hair. "This is the first time we can have a party without our parents!"

"We must find a place to have the party," says Nick. He is 14 years old and he's a good cook. His parents have a Chinese restaurant in Salem.

"Let's see!" says Bill. "I can ask my grandmother." Bill Goldberg is a handsome boy of 14. His favorite school subject is science. He lives with his grandmother.

"Susan, do you have a scary costume for Halloween?" asks Kelly.

"It's a surprise! I can't tell you," says Susan.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" Bill asks.

"Yes!" they all say.

"Oh, I don't!" says Bill. "Science can explain everything."

"Really?" says Nick. "A lot of strange things happen on Halloween night. My grandparents come from China. They believe in ghosts and evil spirits too."

Bill laughs.

"Do you remember the story of the old woman in the cemetery..."

"Oh, Nick, please don't tell us again!" says Bill.

Nick smiles mysteriously. It's 8.30 a.m. and the school bell is ringing.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WITCH MUSEUM

School finishes at 3.30 p.m. Kelly and Megan meet their friends outside.

"Do you have any ideas for our Halloween party?" Kelly asks.

"No, I don't," says Susan.

"I have an idea," says Megan. "Let's visit one of the Salem Witch Museums! We can get many ideas from there."

"That's a good idea!" says Susan. "There are a lot of scary things there. Remember, Salem is the 'Witch City'. At the museum there are pictures of the witch hangings. There are also the names of the Salem witches of 1692. We can read about their terrible magic."

"Oh, how exciting!" say Megan and Kelly.

"Let's go," says Susan.

The girls call Nick and Bill. Together the five friends go to the museum. When they arrive it's late.

"How many tickets do you want?" asks the attendant.

"Five tickets, please," says Bill.

"That's \$10. Remember, the museum closes at 5 p.m. You only have half an hour."

The five friends walk around the museum. They look at the interesting exhibits.

"Look, here are the names of the witches of 1692... and here are the pictures of the hangings," says Nick.

"Look at this rope!" says Bill.

"How scary!" say the girls.

"I'm going upstairs," says Megan.

"Be careful," says Kelly.

Megan laughs, "I'm not afraid of witches or ghosts."

There are no visitors upstairs. There is a sweet smell of roses in the air. Megan walks around and looks at everything. Then she sees an old lady. She has a long black dress with small black buttons. Her skin is very white and her lips are very red. There is a strange red mark around her neck. She smiles at Megan. Megan smiles too, but she is nervous. Suddenly the air is very cold.

"How strange," she thinks. "I want to go downstairs."

When Kelly sees her, she asks, "What's upstairs?"

"Oh, some interesting exhibits," answers Megan.

"The museum closes in five minutes," says the attendant.

Susan buys a book called Salem and the Witches of 1692.

The three girls walk to the front door.

"Is there anyone still upstairs?" asks the attendant.

"Yes," says Megan. "There's an old lady."

"Really!" says the attendant. "That's strange. You are the only visitors in the museum this afternoon. There aren't many visitors here on Fridays."

"There is an old lady upstairs," says Megan.

"I'm going upstairs to see," says the attendant.

After a few minutes he returns. His face is red and he says, "Is this a joke? There's no one upstairs... and the only door of the museum is this front door."

Megan's friends look at her. She is silent.

Then she says, "Let's look outside."

They run out of the museum and look outside. There's no one in the street, only a black cat.

After this strange experience they walk home.

"Now I have a lot of ideas for our Halloween party," says Kelly.

"Yes, I do too," says Susan.

"You're very quiet, Megan," says Bill.

"I'm thinking about the old lady at the museum."

CHAPTER THREE

September 22, 1692

There is no school on Saturday. It is a cloudy autumn day. Autumn is usually a beautiful season in Salem. The leaves on the trees are yellow, red and orange.

Mr and Mrs Connor have a big orange pumpkin. They are making a jack o'lantern. "When it's finished we can put it in front of the window," says Mr Connor. "Are you girls ready for Halloween?"

"No, Dad. We must find a place for the party," says Kelly.

"We must make our costumes too," says Megan.

"Today is a perfect day to do many things," says Mrs Connor. "Finish your homework this morning. Then you can look for a place for the party this afternoon."

"I can start my science homework," says Megan.

"I must study English," says Kelly. "I have a test on Wednesday." They go to their room and study until noon. Then the phone rings.

"Hello! This is Bill. I have a place for our party."

"Really! That's great! Where is it?" says Kelly.

"It's a surprise. Meet me and Nick in front of the school at 1.30 p.m. We can go together."

"OK. At half past one then," says Kelly.

The five friends meet in front of their school. They are very excited.

"Where is the place?" asks Susan.

"Follow me," says Bill. "My grandmother knows this place. It is the best place for a spooky Halloween party."

They walk past the park, past the tennis courts and past the church. Then they walk down a country road. At the end of the road they see an old cemetery.

"This is the oldest cemetery in Salem," says Bill. They enter the old cemetery.

"Look at the dates on the tombstones. This one says September 22, 1692," says Megan.

"This one says September 22, 1692, too," says Kelly.

"Here's another tombstone with the same date, September 22, 1692," says Nick. They look at a lot of tombstones.

"These are probably the tombstones of the Salem witches," says Bill.

"How spooky! Let's go now!" says Susan.

The five friends run to the country road. Then they walk for a few minutes. At the end of the road they see an old, abandoned house. It is near a forest. There is a rose bush near the door.

"This is the house for our party," says Bill. His friends are very surprised. They look at the house. "Wow! Is this a haunted house?" Nick asks.

Bill laughs. "This is a very old house from the 1650s. Poor people sometimes live in it but then they go away. It's abandoned. There is no electricity."

"Why is it abandoned?" asks Nick.

"They say strange things happen here. It's the perfect place for a spooky party. Remember, ghosts don't exist," Bill says.

"Are you sure?" asks Kelly.

The five friends look at each other.

"There is something strange about this place," says Nick.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Abandoned House

Megan looks at the old house and says, "Look at the writing above the door:

HOME OF ABIGAIL CROSS OCTOBER 31, 1627 - SEPTEMBER 22, 1692

Who is Abigail Cross? Look at the date: September 22, 1692. Do you remember the tombstones? Many of them have the same date."

"You're right," says Susan. "Let me look in my new book, Salem and the Witches of 1692." After a few minutes Susan says, "Oh, no! Abigail Cross is a witch. Her name is in this book. I don't like this old house."

"Let's find another place for the party," says Kelly.

"You girls are silly! This is perfect!" says Bill. "Come on! Follow me!"

Bill is the first to enter the house. Nick and the girls follow. It is very cold inside. There is a big room with an old table, chairs and a cupboard.

On the wall there is an old portrait of a woman. She is wearing a long black dress. She has a red rose in her hand. Her eyes are dark and evil.

"This portrait is very old. There's a date at the bottom. It says June 1659," says Megan.

"It's probably a portrait of Abigail Cross," says Nick.

"She's looking at us and she's... smiling!" says Megan.

"What an evil smile!" says Susan.

"Everything here is so old and scary," says Kelly.

"I like it," says Nick. "We can make spooky decorations and light candles. I can bring my portable radio for music."

"First we must clean this house. Then we can make the decorations," says Susan.

Nick and Bill go to buy some cleaning products. The girls talk about the party.

"How many chairs are there?" asks Kelly.

"There are eight chairs," answers Megan.

"We must bring chairs from home. Fifteen of our friends are coming to the party," says Susan. "I want to look at the old kitchen."

"I want to look at the other rooms," says Megan.

She walks down a long corridor. She finds three rooms with some old furniture. Then she opens a small door and enters a dark bedroom. There is a sweet smell of roses.

She sees a long black dress with small black buttons on a big bed. On the floor she sees a pair of old black boots. They are wet! She looks outside the window. It is raining.

She looks in an old mirror. Someone in the mirror is looking at her!

Megan is afraid. She wants to leave the room but her legs can't move. She wants to call Kelly and Susan. But she has no voice.

Suddenly Kelly calls her. "Megan, what are you doing?" Megan can't answer.

Kelly and Susan run to the bedroom. "Megan, what's happening?"

Megan's face is white. She points to the black dress and the wet boots. The girls are very surprised.

"Do you remember the old lady at the museum?" Megan whispers. "This is her dress and those are her boots. Look, they're wet!"

"Are you sure that old lady exists? Maybe it's your imagination," says Kelly.

Megan is angry. "It's not my imagination. This is Abigail Cross' house and these are her clothes. Abigail Cross is here!"

"Abigail Cross is dead!"

"But her ghost isn't!"

CHAPTER FIVE

Halloween Costumes

Megan, Kelly and Susan go back to the big room. They look at the old portrait. They don't like it.

Soon the boys arrive with some cleaning products and a broom.

The girls say, "Abigail Cross' dress and boots are in the bedroom!"

"Someone wants to scare us," says Bill. "The door of the house is always open. Anyone can enter. This is a very old house. Old houses have old clothes!"

Nick is very quiet. Then he says, "This is exciting. On Monday we can tell our friends about this place! Maybe we can see a ghost!"

"Ghosts! How silly! Come on, let's start cleaning," says Bill.

They clean the windows, the table and the chairs.

"It's 5 p.m. It's time to go home," says Nick. "I help my parents at the restaurant. The restaurant is always full on Saturdays. We can return tomorrow for the decorations."

"We must also talk about the games for the party," says Susan.

"OK, let's meet here tomorrow at 1 p.m." says Bill. Everyone goes home.

After dinner Mrs Connor makes Halloween cookies and pumpkin pies. Mr Connor puts the jack o'lantern in front of the window.

Kelly and Megan go to their room. They want to make their Halloween costumes.

"Do you think Abigail Cross is a ghost?" asks Kelly.

"I'm very confused. I don't know, but that house is... evil."

"I don't want to be afraid," says Kelly. "I want to have fun at the Halloween party."

"You're right. Let's not talk about ghosts," says Megan.

The girls start making their Halloween costumes. "I want to be an alien," says Megan. "Look at my green mask!"

"It's nice. I like it. But what can I be?" Kelly thinks for a long time. Then she says, "I want to be Abigail Cross, the witch."

"No, Kelly, don't do it!" says Megan.

"Why not? It's an easy costume. I can wear mom's long black dress. Then I can buy a mask and a wig. I have a pair of old black boots. I want to scare everyone," Kelly laughs.

"Aren't you afraid?" asks Megan.

"No, it's just a Halloween costume," says Kelly. "Remember, our costumes are a secret. Don't tell anyone!"

On Sunday afternoon the five friends meet at the abandoned house.

When they enter they look at the portrait. The woman has the same evil smile. But there is something different in the portrait. Megan sees it. She turns on her torch and says, "Look at the woman in the portrait. She has a red mark around her neck."

"You're right," says Nick. They all look at the portrait. "What does it mean?"

"It's your imagination," says Bill. "You can see the red mark because you have a torch. Who wants to go downstairs and see the basement?" asks Bill. "We can use the basement for scary games."

"You boys can go to the basement," says Susan. "We want to move the old table to the center of the room."

Megan goes to the dark bedroom. She opens the door and looks inside. The black dress and the black boots are still there. She shuts the door quickly. Her heart is beating fast.

When the boys return they say, "There is nothing in the basement, only some old barrels."

CHAPTER SIX

Mysterious Names

The girls look at the floor. "This floor is very dirty. It is made of stone and it's difficult to clean. Let's wash it with hot water and detergent," says Susan.

So, Susan and Kelly wash the stone floor. Suddenly Susan stops washing. She looks at the stones and says, "I can't believe this. There are names on these stones!" Her friends come and look. "One name is George Johnson. Then there's Rebecca Putnam and Sarah Morely."

"This is very strange," says Bill. "Look at the other names." He reads them and then he counts them. "There are 20. This is a mystery. Who wrote them? What do they mean?"

"Can you repeat the names? Perhaps I can find them in my book," says Susan. Bill tells her the names. She finds all of them in her book. "How spooky! These are the names of the twenty witches of the hangings of 1692. There are seven men and thirteen women. Look at this page:

THE SALEM WITCH HANGINGS OF 1692

June 10 - one hanging

July 19 - five hangings

August 19 - five hangings

September 19 - one hanging

September 22 - eight hangings."

"What can we do?" asks Kelly.

"Nothing," says Bill. "Are you afraid of names on stones?"

"But these are not the names of ordinary people. These are the names of twenty witches," says Megan.

"Witches have magic powers."

"We can show our friends at the party. We can scare them," says Nick laughing.

"That's a great idea. This Halloween party is exciting!" says Bill. "Let's put the decorations on the walls. There are bats, spiders and pumpkins!"

"Who wants to bring the food and drinks?" asks Nick.

"Megan and I can bring pumpkin pies and Halloween cookies," says Kelly.

"I can bring apple pies, popcorn and sweets," says Susan.

"Let me bring drinks and candles," says Bill.

"Then I can bring paper plates, paper cups and a paper tablecloth. I can also bring some chairs," says Nick.

"Don't forget your portable radio, Nick," says Kelly.

"OK. So, everything is ready for the party," says Bill. "We must be here at 8 o'clock to prepare things. The party starts at 9 p.m."

It's Monday, 31 October - Halloween! There are Halloween decorations in the homes, in the shops and in the classrooms. When school finishes, Kelly buys a wig and a mask of an old lady.

That evening Kelly and Megan put on their costumes.

When Mrs Connor sees them she says, "What wonderful costumes - a green alien and an old lady!"

"I'm not an ordinary old lady. I'm a Salem witch and the year is 1692!" says Kelly.

"Wow!" says Mr Connor. "Where is the party?"

"It's at the abandoned house near the old cemetery."

"That's exciting! Have fun!" says Mr Connor.

"Goodbye girls! Have fun!" says Mrs Connor.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The House of Horrors

The five friends meet at eight that evening. Everyone has a scary costume. Bill is a vampire. Nick is a skeleton. Susan is a ghost. When they see Kelly's costume they laugh and say, "Good evening, Mrs Abigail Cross!"

They cover the old table with a paper tablecloth. Then they put the food and drinks on the table. They light the candles because there is no electricity.

Nick turns on his portable radio. Megan goes to the dark bedroom. She opens the door and looks inside. The black dress and black boots are not there. She is afraid, but she says nothing to her friends.

Soon their friends arrive. They all have scary costumes and masks.

"Is this a haunted house? It's very spooky," they say. No one answers.

Some boys and girls dance. Others eat, talk and laugh. Several hours pass. Everyone is happy. "It's a great party," they say.

"It's time for the treasure hunt," says Bill. "You all have different maps. Let's start."

Everyone starts in a different room. Some start in the kitchen, others start in the bedrooms.

Kelly takes her torch and goes downstairs to the basement. She looks inside a big barrel. It is very dark and Kelly is in the basement alone. Suddenly there is a sweet smell of roses. She turns on her torch and she is terrified. The old lady from the museum is standing by the barrel!

"You are not Abigail Cross. I am Abigail Cross. Tonight is Halloween and you are in my house. On this night we spirits look for young bodies. When we find a young body we can live again. At midnight my spirit enters your body. You must die so that I can live!"

Kelly's heart is beating fast. Her legs can't move. She has no voice. Abigail Cross touches Kelly with her cold hand. She takes off Kelly's mask and wig. "Your bed is in the barrel. You are tired. You must sleep... forever." Kelly obeys. She goes to sleep inside the barrel. Abigail puts on Kelly's mask and wig. She goes upstairs to the party.

At half past eleven Nick says, "It's almost midnight. Let's sit down and take off our masks. We want to see the person behind the mask!"

Nick asks, "Who is the alien?" The alien takes off her mask. "It's Megan!" Everyone laughs. "And who is the ghost? It's Susan!"

"Who is the old lady?" asks Bill. The old lady takes off her mask. Everyone screams. It's Abigail Cross' ghost! Her face is white and her eyes are red. She has a red mark around her neck. She laughs and her teeth are black. Everyone is terrified.

Bill looks at her and says, "That's Kelly's costume. Where is Kelly?"

"I am Kelly. At midnight my spirit enters her body. Remember, I am a witch."

Everyone wants to run away. They go to the door but they cannot open it. There are the horrible faces of the other ghosts outside the windows. The ghosts are looking inside.

"Who are these people?" asks Bill.

"Ha, ha! They are the witches of the hangings of 1692. Look at the red mark on my neck. This is the mark of the rope. Twenty witches for twenty young bodies. Now you are in my house. This is the house of horrors. No one leaves this house alive. At midnight our spirits enter your bodies. We want to live again. We want to bring evil to Salem," says Abigail Cross.

"Where is Kelly?" asks Bill.

"Look at the portrait on the wall," laughs the witch.

Everyone looks at the portrait. They see Kelly's face! Her lips are red and there is a red mark around her neck.

"This is our party, not yours!" screams the witch.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Fire!

Suddenly the decorations on the wall start moving. The bats are flying around the room. They are making strange noises.

"No!" screams a girl. "There's a bat in my hair." "Help!" screams a boy. "This bat is a vampire!"

Slowly the ghosts enter the house. They penetrate the walls. They are really spooky. They move around their victims.

Megan and Susan are terrified and say, "They're waiting for midnight! Do you remember the twenty names on the floor? These are their ghosts!"

"We must find Kelly," says Megan.

A candle on the table falls. The paper tablecloth is burning. "Fire! We must get out of here!" says Bill.

"Oh, no! It's a big fire!" says Susan.

"We can't open the door," says Nick. "It's five to midnight. At midnight the ghosts take our bodies. What can we do?"

"I must find Kelly," says Bill.

He takes his torch and runs to the basement. He looks in all the barrels. Finally he sees Kelly. She is sleeping.

"Kelly, Kelly!" says Bill. "Wake up! Wake up!"

Kelly does not wake up. "Kelly!" says Bill. "Kelly!"

Bill takes Kelly in his arms and carries her upstairs.

It's two minutes to midnight. There is fire everywhere. The room is full of black smoke. Everyone is terrified. Bats and spiders are flying in the air. The ghosts are waiting for midnight.

No one can open the door or the windows.

Suddenly the portrait is burning. The fire is destroying the evil spirit.

"Look!" exclaims Megan. "Abigail Cross is burning!"

"Yes," says Nick, "and the other ghosts are burning too!"

"Look, the door is opening," says Bill. "Quick, let's go!"

Everyone runs outside. Bill carries Kelly outside.

"Is everyone here?" asks Nick. He counts. There are twenty people.

The fire destroys the house and the evil ghosts inside. Terrible noises come from the house.

"This is the scariest Halloween party of my life," says one of the boys.

Megan and Bill are waking up Kelly. She is still sleeping. But no one can wake her up. "Is she in a coma?" asks Megan.

"I don't know," answers Bill. Everyone is standing near Kelly. "Oh, Kelly, please wake up," says Megan.

Suddenly it starts raining. There is thunder and lightning. Kelly moves her head. "Where am I?" she asks.

"Oh, Kelly! You're OK! I'm so happy," says Megan.

"What's happening?" asks Kelly.

Bill smiles and explains everything to her.

"Do you believe in ghosts now?" asks Nick.

Bill looks at him and slowly says, "Well... yes."

Then they all go home.

Kelly has some strange dreams that night. The next morning she wakes up early. Megan is still sleeping.

She is happy to be home. She gets up and goes to the bathroom. She looks in the mirror and cannot believe her eyes. What can she see? A red mark around her neck. A mysterious voice in the mirror says, "When you play with fire, Kelly, you burn your fingers!"

- THE END -

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