

# Truly, Madly, Sheeplly



**A Pumpkin Falls  
Mystery**

**HEATHER VOGEL FREDERICK**

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## PROLOGUE

It's all Ella Bellow's fault, if you ask me, which nobody ever does.

If only she'd kept her famously big mouth shut, the fall of my eighth-grade year would have been a nice, fat helping of normal.

And here's the thing—I really *like* normal.

Unfortunately, my life has been anything but normal since my family moved last winter from Austin, Texas, to Pumpkin Falls, New Hampshire, and I accidentally became a middle school private eye. You wouldn't think all that much could happen in a town as tiny as ours, but somehow, I keep stumbling over mysteries that need to be solved.

Ella couldn't resist a juicy piece of gossip, though. Once she'd blabbed to my aunt that the Farnsworths were thinking of selling their dilapidated old farm, in the shake of a lamb's tail—literally, a lamb's tail—my life was turned upside down again.

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This time around, instead of that nice, fat helping of normal I'd been looking forward to, regular stuff like school and swim team and hanging out with my friends and helping at our family's bookstore, I found myself knee-deep in sheep droppings in a possibly haunted barn, embarking on a life of crime. Well, okay, maybe not a life of *actual* crime, but how many eighth graders do you know who've had to learn how to pick a lock? I say "had to" because I didn't have a choice, really—not if I wanted to clear my brother's name and save our town's biggest festival of the year. The Halloween Pumpkin Toss may not sound like much to the average person, but here in Pumpkin Falls, it's like the Fourth of July and Christmas and your birthday all rolled into one.

"Sometimes, crazy is the best thing to do," my aunt True says, and I certainly did my fair share of crazy this time around. Of course, I had no idea that any of this was on the horizon back when my aunt first told us about the farm. All I'd been thinking about—all any of us Lovejoys had been thinking about—was the wedding.



## CHAPTER 1

“Don’t you think you’re being a bit hasty?” said my father, reaching for the platter in the center of the kitchen table.

I watched as the fingers of his prosthetic hand deftly plucked a waffle from the pile and transferred it to his plate. My father had come a long way in the year since he’d lost his right arm to the war in Afghanistan. None of us gave his expertise with his titanium fingers a second thought now, including him.

“Hasty?” Aunt True frowned. “I’ve known Rusty since kindergarten!”

My father snorted. “I’m not talking about the *wedding*, True—I’m talking about the old Farnsworth place! What do you two know about farming?”

“Living on a farm has always been one of my fondest dreams,” my aunt told him loftily. “Rusty’s, too.”

My father gave her a dubious look. “Since when?”

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“Since I spent six weeks on a sheep farm in New Zealand,” my aunt replied.

The titanium fingers, which had now latched onto the pitcher of maple syrup, froze. “That was two decades ago! You were on a high school exchange program!”

My aunt was silent, but only for a moment. “There was also my trip to Tibet.”

“What happened in Tibet?” I asked, hoping for a story. Aunt True was a world traveler, and her adventures in remote corners of the world often sparked epic tales.

“I worked with yak herders” was all she said this time, though.

“What’s a yak?” asked Pippa, my youngest sister.

“It’s like a big, ugly, hairy cow,” my middle sister, Lauren, told her.

Pippa scrunched her nose. “Maybe they should call it a yuck.”

“Good one, Pipster!” My brother Hatcher slapped her a high five.

“Spending a few weeks with sheep, or with yak herders, or whatever other experience you think you’ve had, is a whole lot different from running a farm of your own,” my father persisted. “And what about Rusty? He’s spent most of his life shut up in a library!”

My dad had a point. Aunt True was always insisting that Erastus Peckinpugh, her history-professor fiancé, had what

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she called “hidden depths.” But he didn’t exactly strike me—or anyone else in town, for that matter, judging from the talk I’d overheard at the general store—as farmer material. He must have kept that side of himself really well hidden.

“Libraries are fine places to learn a great many things,” my aunt said stiffly.

My father snorted again. This time my mother stepped in.

“Perhaps it’s time to mind your own business, J. T.,” she told him. “Everyone’s entitled to their dreams.”

My father speared a piece of syrup-drenched waffle with his fork. “Fine. But everyone knows that place is a wreck. It was a wreck even back when we were kids!”

“I’ll admit it needs work,” allowed Aunt True. “That’s why we can afford it.”

“What it needs,” my father declared, shoving the bite of waffle into his mouth, “is a bulldozer.”

“Daddy’s talking with his mouth full,” Pippa observed, and my mother shushed her.

My father and his older sister had been going around and around like this ever since Aunt True had announced that she and Professor Rusty—soon to be Uncle Rusty after their wedding next weekend—had bought the old farm on the outskirts of town.

It was Ella Bellow, our town’s retired postmistress turned knitting store owner, who broke the news that it was going

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up for sale. Ella considered herself in charge of gossip in Pumpkin Falls. I'd known something was up when I glanced out the window of our bookshop and saw her burst from the front door of A Stitch in Time and make a beeline across the street. Either her entire yarn supply was on fire, or Ella had news to share.

"True!" she'd called, barging in through the bookshop door. The bells attached to the top of it jangled vigorously, apparently as excited as she was. Miss Marple, my grandparents' golden retriever, who had been napping in her dog bed by the counter, lifted her head and woofed.

"My aunt's in the back office, Mrs. Bellow," I told her. I was killing time before my piano lesson, trying to come up with a concept for a special window display for the leaf peepers. "Leaf peepers" were what the locals called the hordes of tourists who descended on little towns all over New England every autumn, eager for a glimpse of our famous colorful fall foliage.

"True!" Ella called again, louder this time. "Have you heard?"

We were having a quiet afternoon, fortunately. There were only two customers in the store at the moment, neither of whom were local. If Ella had something embarrassing to share, at least they wouldn't know who she was talking about.

My aunt emerged from the back. "What's up, Ella? Is everything okay?"

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Ella drew herself up to her full height, which was considerable. She was almost as tall as my aunt and me, and we both stood six feet in our socks. After a dramatic pause, she blurted, “The Farnsworths are selling up!”

Aunt True gave her a puzzled look. “What do you mean?”

“I just got off the phone with Thelma Farnsworth. She finally managed to talk Elmer into retirement. They’re moving into town to live with Ethel and Ike.”

Ethel was Thelma Farnsworth’s sister. She was married to Elmer Farnsworth’s brother, Ike. Ike and Ethel owned Pumpkin Falls’s general store.

My aunt looked thoughtful. “Is that right?”

Thelma’s been wanting to do this for a while now,” Ella barreled on, “but you know how Elmer is when he digs his heels in.”

Sadly, I did. Part of living in a small town was knowing exactly this kind of detail about, well, pretty much everybody. Elmer Farnsworth was famously stubborn.

“It was the mix-up with the pumpkin trophy that pushed Thelma over the edge,” Ella continued. “She gave Elmer an ultimatum—he could move into town with her, or she’d go alone.”

That mix-up had been a big part of my summer. The whole town had been in an uproar when the silver pumpkin trophy disappeared after the Fourth of July road race, and while everyone was relieved when it turned up safe and sound



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again, no one was happy with Elmer, who had inadvertently caused the commotion in the first place.

“They may already have a buyer, in fact. Apparently some developer has been sniffing around.”

Aunt True snapped to attention. “What do you mean, developer?”

“Real estate,” Ella replied, clearly pleased to have delivered such an item of interest. “He’s looking for land to build a strip mall. That’s prime property, right on the road into town.”

“A *strip mall*?” My aunt stared at her, aghast. “But that would be a crime! That dairy farm has been in the Farnsworth family for generations! It’s a local landmark!”

Ella nodded, trying unsuccessfully to arrange her face into a mournful expression. But she couldn’t hide her smile. My aunt’s gratifying reaction to her exclusive tidbit had clearly made her day. News delivered, Ella swiftly bid us goodbye. I watched as she trotted away down Main Street. Ella was more efficient than the Internet when it came to spreading gossip, and I gave it less than fifteen minutes before all of Pumpkin Falls knew about the Farnsworths’ farm.

She was barely out of sight before Aunt True grabbed her jacket. “Truly, can you watch the store for me for a few minutes? I have an errand to run—I won’t be long, I promise.”

If Elmer Farnsworth was famously stubborn, my aunt was famously determined. The real estate developer didn’t stand a chance once she’d made up her mind. There’d been a flurry

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of interest from other buyers as well, including Luke and Laura Mahoney of Mahoney's Antiques, the business next door to ours. The Mahoneys thought the property would be the perfect spot for expanding their business, and had hoped to turn the barn into a larger retail area for their store. And there was also a retired couple from New York City looking for a weekend home. But in the end, Aunt True and Professor Rusty convinced the Farnsworths to sell the farm to them instead, and now it was theirs.

Truth be told, I kind of agreed with my father. Aunt True had never mentioned anything to me before about wanting to own a farm. I gave her a sidelong glance. She was dressed in her usual part hippie, part parrot fashion: a shapeless, fuzzy lime-green sweater pulled haphazardly over camouflage leggings. Bright yellow clogs completed the outfit. Her hair was pulled up in a messy bun skewered with what looked like, and probably were, chopsticks. Chopsticks brought back from a trip to some obscure country I'd never heard of on the other side of the world, no doubt.

Was she farmer material? I took a bite of waffle and pondered this question.

My pondering was cut short by a loud honking outside as a rattletrap truck pulled into the driveway. Professor Rusty emerged from the driver's side, wearing overalls and a huge grin. Spotting my aunt through the kitchen window, he held up a set of keys and dangled them triumphantly.

Aunt True's face lit up. "Rusty got the keys to the farm!"

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Darting out the back door, she launched herself at her fiancé. We were all right behind her.

“Congratulations, homeowners!” said my mother.

“Who wants a tour?” asked Professor Rusty.

Aunt True looked over at my parents. “Do we have time?”

“No,” said my father, at the same time that my mother said, “Yes.”

Gramps and Lola were flying in for the wedding from Africa, where they were stationed in the Peace Corps. We were skipping church to drive down to Logan Airport in Boston to meet their flight from Namibia. Lauren and Pippa had been busy for days with colored pens and glitter decorating welcome signs for us to hold up to greet them when they arrived.

“Oh, come on, J. T.,” said my mother. “Stop being such a stick-in-the-mud. We can manage a quick tour and still make it to Boston in time.”

We didn’t even wait for my father to reply. Without another thought for our unfinished breakfast, my brothers and sisters and I all piled into our family’s minivan. My mother slid into the driver’s seat, then leaned out the window and smiled at my father. “Coming?”

“Do I have a choice?” he grumbled, but he gave her a reluctant smile in return. “Although I can’t say I’m not curious to see what kind of a mess True’s gotten herself into this time.”

And with that we followed my aunt and almost-uncle’s truck out of the driveway.



## CHAPTER 2

My father was right about one thing. The farm did need a bulldozer. Or maybe dynamite.

“Wow, the farmhouse is so—it’s so . . .” My mother groped for the right word. “*Quaint.*”

“Does ‘quaint’ mean it’s the perfect location for a horror movie?” Hatcher whispered to me as we stared at the property that our aunt and soon-to-be uncle were about to call home.

If the farmhouse’s peeling paint and shabby exterior qualified as “quaint,” the barn that loomed beside it was positively scary. I was usually a big fan of barns, ever since Lola had read *Charlotte’s Web* to us when we were little. But Hatcher was right, this one definitely looked like horror-movie material. Its once-bright-red exterior had faded to the rusty color of an old scab, part of the roof had caved in, most of the windows were either cracked or broken, and the missing clapboards gave it a gap-toothed look, like Pippa back when her baby teeth had

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fallen out. On top of that, the entire structure was leaning at an alarming angle, as if it was planning to cut and run.

“Elmer and Thelma really let things go around here,” said my father, shaking his head.

Aunt True was oblivious to our dismay. “Sure, it needs a little work, but look at that view! Could it be any more glorious?!”

She was right about that, at least. Situated just down the road from the Freeman family’s farm, where my friend Franklin and his sister Annie and their parents lived, the Farnsworth place shared the same sweeping view of the Pumpkin River Valley. Even though peak color was still a week or two away, according to the weather reports—everybody got involved when leaf-peeping season rolled around, even the weather forecasters—the foliage was impressive, a bright patchwork of reds and oranges and yellows threaded with evergreens.

Technically, I guessed I qualified as a leaf peeper too. Before moving to New Hampshire last winter, we’d only ever visited Gramps and Lola during summer vacation and at Christmastime—never in the fall. I used to think the whole idea of leaf peeping was ridiculous, but as the colors had intensified over the past couple of weeks, I was beginning to understand what people got all excited about. It was pretty amazing.

“The house was built in 1779,” Professor Rusty told us proudly. “It’s one of the oldest in Pumpkin Falls.”

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“It looks like it, too,” Hatcher said under his breath.

“Come see the barn and outbuildings, J.T.!” Professor Rusty charged down the driveway without waiting for a reply.

Lauren grabbed Pippa’s hand and followed. “Let’s go see the animals!”

My sister Lauren was a huge animal lover. Aside from Aunt True and Professor Rusty, she was the only one in the family who’d been enthusiastic about the whole farm idea from the start. The fact that it was located practically next door to her best friend, Annie Freeman, didn’t hurt, either.

My oldest brother, Danny, loped off after them, while Hatcher and I followed our mother and aunt toward the house.

“Wait until you see inside, Dinah!” Aunt True enthused, fumbling with the keys to the front door. “It has an open hearth with the original beehive oven, and the most gorgeous wide-plank floors.”

Given the farmhouse’s dilapidated exterior, I was surprised at how inviting it was inside. It was shabby, for sure. The floors were worn from centuries of use, the wallpaper was peeling, and everything smelled faintly of woodsmoke. Other than that, though, it wasn’t bad. No piles of dust, no cobwebs. October sunshine poured in through the front windows, lighting up the enormous brick fireplace in the living room—almost big enough to stand in—along with all the stuff that the Farnsworths had left behind.

“There are some valuable antiques here, True,” said my

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mother, scanning the room in surprise. “You should get Luke Mahoney out to appraise them for you. That clock on the mantel is a beauty, and I think this desk might be bird’s-eye maple. And heaven knows what’s in all those boxes!”

Aunt True nodded. “Thelma and Elmer don’t have kids, and their nieces and nephews already took what they wanted. They were happy to leave us the rest.”

I was sure they were—especially Thelma. She found Elmer’s piles of junk exasperating. Elmer Farnsworth was a notorious hoarder, famous for picking through trash and surfing yard sales and junk shops. “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure” was his motto, but personally, most of his “treasures” always looked like trash to me.

The farmhouse was much smaller than Gramp and Lola’s house over on Maple Street, where my family was living. Next to the living room was the dining room, and off that was a snug bookshelf-lined room that my aunt told us would be Professor Rusty’s office.

“It’s called a borning room,” she said, opening the door to show it off. “It shares a wall with the fireplace and would have been the warmest room in the house back in the day. Babies were born in here, and if anyone wasn’t feeling well, they would have slept in here, too.”

We went upstairs next. There were three bedrooms, all with sloped ceilings under the eaves.

“Cozy,” my mother pronounced.

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“I’m going to check out the attic,” Hatcher said, opening a narrow door at the end of the hallway. “Wanna come?”

I took one look at the steep, cobweb-covered stairway and shuddered. Spiders were at the very top of the list of things I was not good at. “Maybe another time.”

Hatcher shrugged and disappeared. I followed my mother and aunt down the steep back stairs to the kitchen.

“Wow!” I said in surprise.

Aunt True beamed. “I know, right? I saved the best for last. I would have bought the house just for this alone.”

The kitchen took up most of the back of the house. There was a huge deep sink with a window over it that looked out toward the barn, a breakfast nook, an enormous pantry, and an equally enormous old cast-iron stove.

“Thelma says it still works, and they used it from time to time just for fun, but there’s a real stove, too,” said my aunt, patting an appliance in an eye-watering shade of turquoise.

My mother eyed it dubiously. “You’re probably going to want to replace that. It looks nearly as old as Elmer.”

Aunt True nodded. “It’s on our list.”

The breakfast nook was lined with windows looking out over the valley. Taking a seat on one of its built-in benches, I gazed at the view across the sloping fields to the Pumpkin River far below. It gleamed in the distance like a slender silver ribbon.

Hatcher came clattering down the back stairs and I motioned him over.



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“How’s the attic?” I whispered as he slid in beside me.

“Total haunted house,” he whispered back. “It’s going to be a huge job to clear out all the stuff Elmer left behind. There’s an antique mannequin that scared the socks off me!”

Aunt True crossed the room and knelt beside us. “Our property extends all the way down to the river. There’s a path you can take through the woods to River Road.” Resting her elbows on the windowsill, she surveyed her new kingdom and sighed happily. “This view! I don’t think I’ll ever want to leave the kitchen.”

“That’s good news for Rusty,” said my father, as he and Danny and my almost-uncle came through the back door just then. “Maybe you’ll finally learn how to cook.”

My mother swatted him. “J. T.! Behave yourself!”

“What?” he replied, grinning.

“He’s just kidding, Mom,” added Danny. “Aunt True’s a great cook . . . sometimes.”

My mother gave my brother a swat as well. “I don’t know what I’m going to do with you two.”

“So what do you think of the house?” Professor Rusty looked at her, his expression hopeful.

“It’s showing its age, for sure, but I think that you and True will be very happy here,” my mother told him. “Give it a paint job inside and out—plus some updating and repairs—and I’m sure it will last another two hundred and fifty years.”

“We can handle the updating,” Aunt True said, which

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probably wasn't true. I'd never even seen her screw in a lightbulb. And I was pretty sure her fiancé wasn't the handyman type, either.

"The barn, on the other hand, is a different story," said my dad. "It's a complete disaster."

Professor Rusty's hopeful expression faded. "J. T. is right, unfortunately."

"It isn't a do-it-yourself job, either," my father warned. "You'll need a professional crew. It's going to be expensive."

"Well, we have a head start on that," Aunt True told him, rising to her feet. "Mom and Dad called from the airport in Windhoek before they caught their flight last night. After looking at the photos of the farm that we sent, they decided that helping with the barn repairs would be the best wedding gift they could give us."

That gave me an idea. I turned to my parents. "Hey, how about we chip in too? From the Dandy Dan Fund, I mean."

"Dandy Dan" was the pirate nickname belonging to one of my ancestors. I'd found a gold coin this past summer that had belonged to him, and we'd sold it for a lot of money. "Could we? Please?"

"Technically, it's your money," my mother said slowly, her eyes sliding over to my father.

"Dad?" I begged. "I haven't gotten Aunt True and Professor Rusty a wedding present yet!"

"That's the college fund for you and your brothers and

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sisters,” Aunt True said sharply. “I wouldn’t hear of it.”

My father inhaled, held his breath for a long moment, then exhaled. “Actually, it’s a good idea. I know I tease you a lot, True, and I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t worried that this whole farm venture is going to be a disaster, but we all want to see you and Rusty succeed.”

My mother slipped her arm through his good one, beaming up at him. “I agree.” She turned to my aunt and Professor Rusty. “Nothing would make us happier than to help you two get off to a good start here at—what are you going to call this place, anyway?”

“How about *Bleak House*?” suggested Hatcher, who was reading Charles Dickens in his high school English class.

“Hatcher!” my mother scolded. “Honestly, you Lovejoy men have no manners at all!”

“I’m kidding!” my brother protested, smiling his big sunflower smile. Hatcher got away with murder, thanks to that sunny smile of his.

“We haven’t decided what to call it yet,” said Aunt True. “It needs something besides ‘the old Farnsworth place.’ Something with ‘croft’ in it, we think. ‘Hillcroft Farm’ has a nice ring to it, but we’re still thinking about it.”

“What’s a croft?” I asked.

“It’s the Scottish term for a small farm.” Aunt True and her fiancé exchanged a glance and smiled. “By the way, we finally settled on our honeymoon plans.”

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This had been a topic of intense discussion for weeks now. Historian that he was, Professor Rusty had been angling for a spot with lots of museums, someplace like Williamsburg or Washington, D.C. Aunt True wanted more of a *destination*—Bali, Bora Bora, and Uzbekistan were her top three choices.

“We’re going to Scotland!” my aunt announced.

“Why?” asked Hatcher, speaking for all of us.

“Sheep,” she replied.

Seeing our puzzled faces, Professor Rusty added, “Some of the finest in the world can be found in Scotland, and we want to learn more about them.”

Traveling to Scotland to research sheep didn’t sound like much of a honeymoon to me, but what did I know?

“Rusty and I have decided that we want to raise sheep on our farm,” Aunt True explained. “Just a small flock to start with.”

We gaped at her. She might as well have announced that she and my soon-to-be uncle intended to raise a herd of pterodactyls.

“The knitting community is thriving worldwide,” my aunt continued, “and knitters everywhere want hand-dyed wool from small-scale, independent sheep farmers. It’s all Ella can talk about these days. I figure A Stitch in Time will be our first customer, and if all goes well, we’ll expand throughout New England. Maybe set up a website and sell our products online, too.”

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“But you don’t know anything—” My father coughed as my mother elbowed him. “Uh, I mean, I’m sure you two will be very happy raising . . . sheep.”

Lauren and Pippa burst through the back door just then.

“Where are all the animals?” Lauren demanded. “I thought this was supposed to be a farm. All we found were some dumb chickens.”

“The Farnsworths sold their cows, but they left us their hens as a housewarming gift,” Aunt True told her. “We need to get things shipshape around here first before we become a real live farm. But I was just telling everyone that Rusty and I are planning to raise sheep.”

Lauren’s face fell. “*Sheep?*”

“Maybe a cow someday, too. We’ll see. Or goats.”

“No horses?”

Aunt True shook her head. “Probably not, honey.”

Lauren gave her a sidelong glance. “You could have kittens.” She’d been angling for a kitten for ages now, but my mother had put her foot down.

“I have to draw the line somewhere, Lauren,” she kept telling her. “We have a dog, a hamster, and a rabbit. That’s enough pets for any family!”

Aunt True smiled. “I’m not sure what Mephisto would say about that.” Mephisto was her large black cat. He spent his days intimidating Miss Marple at the bookshop and his nights ruling the roost in my aunt’s apartment above it.

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Lauren gave her a rueful nod. She knew Mephisto as well as the rest of us did. I had a feeling he wasn't going to like living on a farm.

"I tell you what, though," my aunt continued. "Every barn needs a barn cat to chase away the rats and mice. Maybe you can be in charge of finding us one. Mephisto doesn't even need to know it's there. He isn't exactly outdoorsy, so I doubt he'll be spending any serious time in the barn."

Lauren brightened. "I'll ask Belinda! She can help me."

"Excellent plan!"

Belinda Winchester was an older lady who was part-owner of our bookshop. Or at least she used to be. She'd stepped in and saved the day last winter when it was looking like the store might have to close. We'd since paid her back with some of the Dandy Dan money, but Belinda still spent a good chunk of her time at the bookshop "volunteering," as she called it. The rest of her time was spent fostering kittens and finding homes for stray cats. Taking one of them for the farm would make her insanely happy, and it would be the best thank-you that Aunt True could ever give her.

"Can I look after the chickens while you're on your honeymoon?" asked Lauren. "I could ride my bike over before school."

"Sorry, kiddo—I already promised that job to your grandparents."

My mother frowned. "But I thought they were staying with us."

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“Slight change of plans,” my aunt told her. “They’re going to house-sit—or is it farm-sit?—for us while we’re in Scotland.”

“Speaking of grandparents, we’d better get a move on if we want to get to Logan in time for their flight,” said my father, glancing at his watch.

As we all headed back outside, something caught my eye in the nearby pumpkin field. It looked like an orange boulder. “What’s that?”

“That,” Aunt True replied, “is Elmer Farnsworth’s prize pumpkin. We promised he could leave it here until the festival.”

No one needed to ask which festival she was talking about. Competition for the biggest pumpkin award at the annual Halloween Pumpkin Toss was fierce in our town. We all trooped over for a closer inspection. By the looks of it, Elmer had a good chance of winning. His pumpkin was truly impressive. A sign had been stuck into the ground next to it. On it was scrawled: ELMER’S PROPERTY! KEEP AWAY!

“What’s in that shed down there?” asked Danny, pointing to a small structure on the far edge of the field, close to the path through the woods that led down to the river. Like the old barn, the shed looked like it was on the verge of collapsing.

“We want to turn that into a sugar shack eventually,” Professor Rusty replied, running a hand through his wild thatch of dark hair. “There’s a stand of maple trees on the

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property we can tap for syrup. But we told Elmer he can keep it for now, until he finds a new place to store his antique truck and tractor collection.”

As we made our way back across the pumpkin field toward the driveway, I thought about what Hatcher had said earlier. “Total haunted house,” he’d called our aunt and almost-uncle’s new home. Surely he was only joking. The farmhouse wasn’t that bad. Old and shabby and in need of some work, as my mother had said, but hardly haunted. Plus, there weren’t such things as haunted houses.

At least, I didn’t think there were.

The barn, though, was another story entirely. It was enough to give anyone the creeps. I glanced over my shoulder. The shattered windows above its ramshackle door were like two blind eyes staring back at me.

The sun slipped behind a cloud just then, and a sudden gust of chilly wind swirled the leaves by my feet. I shivered and ran toward the minivan.