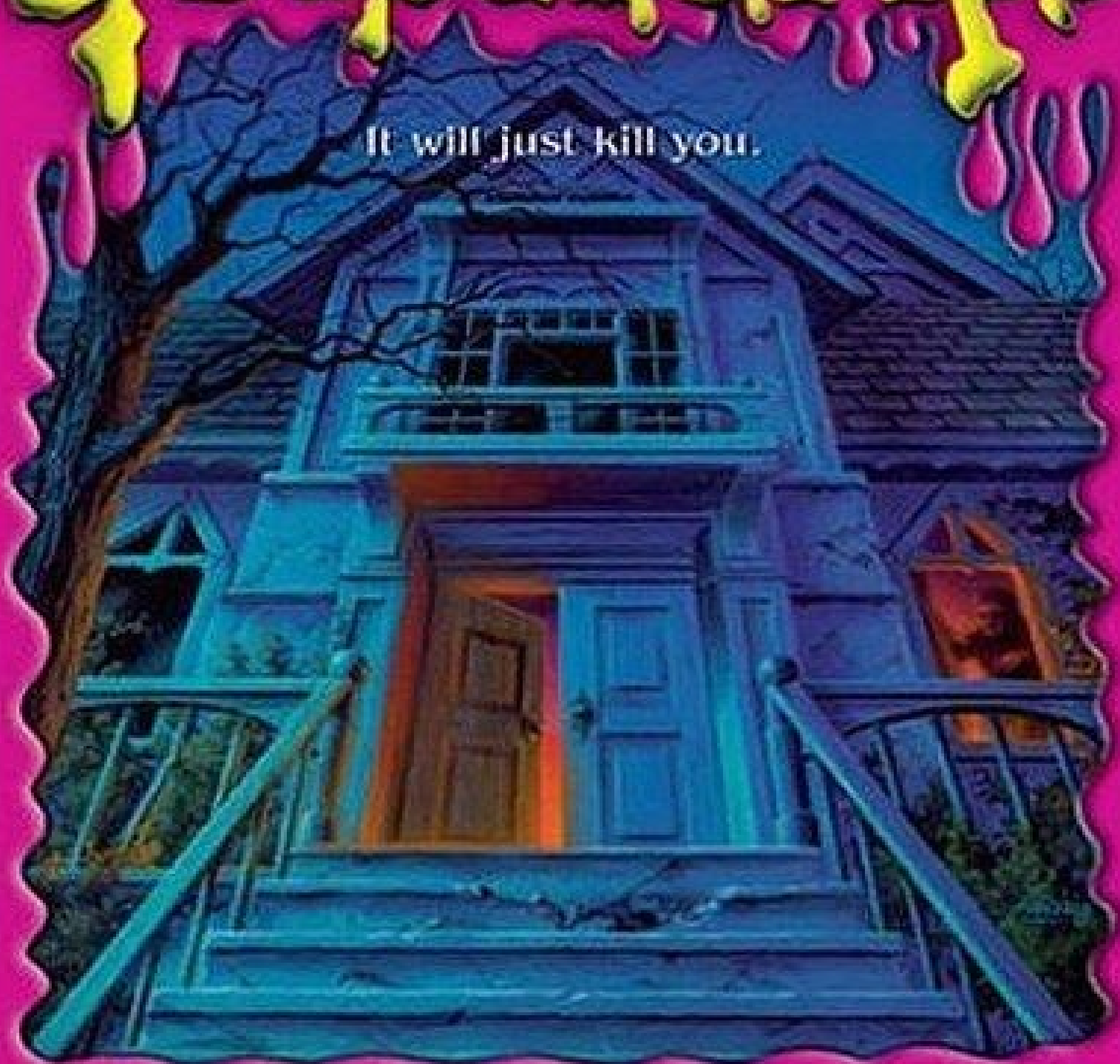


R.L. STINE

# Goosebumps®

It will just kill you.



WELCOME TO DEAD HOUSE

■ SCHOLASTIC

# **WELCOME TO DEAD HOUSE**

**Goosebumps - 01**

**R.L. Stine**

**(An Undead Scan v1.5)**

Josh and I hated our new house.

Sure, it was big. It looked like a mansion compared to our old house. It was a tall redbrick house with a sloping black roof and rows of windows framed by black shutters.

It's so dark, I thought, studying it from the street. The whole house was covered in darkness, as if it were hiding in the shadows of the gnarled, old trees that bent over it.

It was the middle of July, but dead brown leaves blanketed the front yard. Our sneakers crunched over them as we trudged up the gravel driveway.

Tall weeds poked up everywhere through the dead leaves. Thick clumps of weeds had completely overgrown an old flower bed beside the front porch.

This house is creepy, I thought unhappily.

Josh must have been thinking the same thing. Looking up at the old house, we both groaned loudly.

Mr. Dawes, the friendly young man from the local real estate office, stopped near the front walk and turned around.

"Everything okay?" he asked, staring first at Josh, then at me, with his crinkly blue eyes.

"Josh and Amanda aren't happy about moving," Dad explained, tucking his shirttail in. Dad is a little overweight, and his shirts always seem to be coming untucked.

"It's hard for kids," my mother added, smiling at Mr. Dawes, her hands shoved into her jeans pockets as she continued up to the front door. "You know. Leaving all of their friends behind. Moving to a strange new place."

"Strange is right," Josh said, shaking his head. "This house is gross."

Mr. Dawes chuckled. "It's an old house, that's for sure," he said, patting Josh on the shoulder.

"It just needs some work, Josh," Dad said, smiling at Mr. Dawes. "No one has lived in it for a while, so it'll take some fixing up."

"Look how big it is," Mom added, smoothing back her straight black

hair and smiling at Josh. “We’ll have room for a den and maybe a rec room, too. You’d like that—wouldn’t you, Amanda?”

I shrugged. A cold breeze made me shiver. It was actually a beautiful, hot summer day. But the closer we got to the house, the colder I felt.

I guessed it was because of all the tall, old trees.

I was wearing white tennis shorts and a sleeveless blue T-shirt. It had been hot in the car. But now I was freezing. Maybe it’ll be warmer in the house, I thought.

“How old are they?” Mr. Dawes asked Mom, stepping onto the front porch.

“Amanda is twelve,” Mom answered. “And Josh turned eleven last month.”

“They look so much alike,” Mr. Dawes told Mom.

I couldn’t decide if that was a compliment or not. I guess it’s true. Josh and I are both tall and thin and have curly brown hair like Dad’s, and dark brown eyes. Everyone says we have “serious” faces.

“I really want to go home,” Josh said, his voice cracking. “I hate this place.”

My brother is the most impatient kid in the world. And when he makes up his mind about something, that’s it. He’s a little spoiled. At least, I think so. Whenever he makes a big fuss about something, he usually gets his way.

We may look alike, but we’re really not that similar. I’m a lot more patient than Josh is. A lot more sensible. Probably because I’m older and because I’m a girl.

Josh had hold of Dad’s hand and was trying to pull him back to the car. “Let’s go. Come on, Dad. Let’s go.”

I knew this was one time Josh wouldn’t get his way. We were moving to this house. No doubt about it. After all, the house was absolutely free. A great-uncle of Dad’s, a man we didn’t even know, had died and left the house to Dad in his will.

I’ll never forget the look on Dad’s face when he got the letter from the lawyer. He let out a loud whoop and began dancing around the living room. Josh and I thought he’d flipped or something.

“My Great-Uncle Charles has left us a house in his will,” Dad explained, reading and rereading the letter. “It’s in a town called Dark Falls.”

“Huh?” Josh and I cried. “Where’s Dark Falls?”

Dad shrugged.

“I don’t remember your Uncle Charles,” Mom said, moving behind Dad to read the letter over his shoulder.

“Neither do I,” admitted Dad. “But he must’ve been a great guy! Wow! This sounds like an incredible house!” He grabbed Mom’s hands and began dancing happily with her across the living room.

Dad sure was excited. He’d been looking for an excuse to quit his boring office job and devote all of his time to his writing career. This house—absolutely free—would be just the excuse he needed.

And now, a week later, here we were in Dark Falls, a four-hour drive from our home, seeing our new house for the first time. We hadn’t even gone inside, and Josh was trying to drag Dad back to the car.

“Josh—stop pulling me,” Dad snapped impatiently, trying to tug his hand out of Josh’s grasp.

Dad glanced helplessly at Mr. Dawes. I could see that he was embarrassed by how Josh was carrying on. I decided maybe I could help.

“Let go, Josh,” I said quietly, grabbing Josh by the shoulder. “We promised we’d give Dark Falls a chance—remember?”

“I already gave it a chance,” Josh whined, not letting go of Dad’s hand. “This house is old and ugly and I hate it.”

“You haven’t even gone inside,” Dad said angrily.

“Yes. Let’s go in,” Mr. Dawes urged, staring at Josh.

“I’m staying outside,” Josh insisted.

He can be really stubborn sometimes. I felt just as unhappy as Josh looking at this dark, old house. But I’d never carry on the way Josh was.

“Josh, don’t you want to pick out your own room?” Mom asked.

“No,” Josh muttered.

He and I both glanced up to the second floor. There were two large bay windows side by side up there. They looked like two dark eyes staring back at us.

“How long have you lived in your present house?” Mr. Dawes asked Dad.

Dad had to think for a second. “About fourteen years,” he answered. “The kids have lived there for their whole lives.”

“Moving is always hard,” Mr. Dawes said sympathetically, turning his

gaze on me. “You know, Amanda, I moved here to Dark Falls just a few months ago. I didn’t like it much either, at first. But now I wouldn’t live anywhere else.” He winked at me. He had a cute dimple in his chin when he smiled. “Let’s go inside. It’s really quite nice. You’ll be surprised.”

All of us followed Mr. Dawes, except Josh. “Are there other kids on this block?” Josh demanded. He made it sound more like a challenge than a question.

Mr. Dawes nodded. “The school’s just two blocks away,” he said, pointing up the street.

“See?” Mom quickly cut in. “A short walk to school. No more long bus rides every morning.”

“I *liked* the bus,” Josh insisted.

His mind was made up. He wasn’t going to give my parents a break, even though we’d both promised to be open-minded about this move.

I don’t know what Josh thought he had to gain by being such a pain. I mean, Dad already had plenty to worry about. For one thing, he hadn’t been able to sell our old house yet.

I didn’t like the idea of moving. But I knew that inheriting this big house was a great opportunity for us. We were so cramped in our little house.

And once Dad managed to sell the old place, we wouldn’t have to worry at all about money anymore.

Josh should at least give it a chance. That’s what I thought.

Suddenly, from our car at the foot of the driveway, we heard Petey barking and howling and making a fuss.

Petey is our dog, a white, curly-haired terrier, cute as a button, and usually well-behaved. He never minded being left in the car. But now he was yowling and yapping at full volume and scratching at the car window, desperate to get out.

“Petey—quiet! Quiet!” I shouted. Petey usually listened to me.

But not this time.

“I’m going to let him out!” Josh declared, and took off down the driveway toward the car.

“No. Wait—” Dad called.

But I don’t think Josh could hear him over Petey’s wails.

“Might as well let the dog explore,” Mr. Dawes said. “It’s going to be