

# *Daisy and the Dream Defenders*

## *Book 1*

*By*

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*Because every kid deserves a Daisy...*

When sixth-grader Tommy Henderson discovers his dreams—and nightmares—are becoming real, a world of fantasy adventure begins as *Daisy and the Dream Defenders* arrive on Earth to battle a terrifying Darkness that's stealing the dreams of Earth's zombie-like children.

Tommy's life isn't going well. It's been a tough time. It's complicated. Everything's going wrong. His parents are divorcing. He's getting bullied at school. His best friend moved away, and the girl he's had a crush on since forever doesn't even know his name.

But Tommy slowly discovers an ability to *see other worlds* within his dreams, worlds revealed as comic book illustrations. Increasingly unable to separate dream from reality, the comic book characters and scenes break their fictional borders and merge into his actual life.

Tommy discovers that a noir detective from 1948 has transported to his hometown of Kansas City. The detective is the last remaining Dream Detective from the now defunct *Dream Department*, a specialized group of detectives that banish old nightmares—Frankenstein's, Witches and Mummies—that have slipped out of old dimensions and now randomly appear on Earth. But Joe's powers are not strong enough to battle modern day's Nightmare Darkness and is soon joined by a good witch and *Dream Defender* pilots, Jack Shadow and Captain Jessica Star.

When Jack's ship crashes in Tommy's backyard, a quiet suburb of Kansas City, Tommy is discovered to be the Dream Source that *Daisy and the Dream Defenders* have been searching for. Together, they battle a Nightmare Darkness that threatens all children and, with Tommy's special powers as a Dream Source, they discover Dreamlight on Earth—the purest light that fuels and saves the dreams of all children everywhere. *Book 1* of *Daisy and the Dream Defenders* fantasy-adventures series is complete at 65,000 words.

## Prologue

*We are the Dream Defenders—forever dedicated to the protection of all children’s dreams and all beings within multi-dimensional space-time. Our mission is clear—to defend dreams by banishing, battling or destroying the darkest Nightmare world. We defend with all the power and discipline granted and vested our kind and are forever honored to uphold the duty of our charge. We are hereby sworn to find and protect the Dream Sources and forever guard the Candle Fortress.*

## 1

“It’s past your bedtime, honey,” Tommy’s mom says from the kitchen.

“Mom, I’m almost in seventh grade,” annoyed that he still has a bedtime at his age.

“Well, maybe next year you can have a later bedtime—but not this year.”

“My show’s almost over,” he says, as always sitting too close to the TV.

“That’s fine but please go to bed when your show is over. You can read in bed if you want, okay?”

“Okay, Mom,” still annoyed.

“And please don’t sit so close to the TV, Tommy. It’s bad for your eyes.”

“*Okay*,” he says, scooting back so he’s not so close, tired of being talked to like a kid.

“I’ve had a long day, honey, I’m going to bed early. Don’t forget to shut off all the lights. Did you put your clothes in the dryer?”

“No, I forgot,” he says, now mad at himself.

“Okay, get them in the dryer before you go to bed.”

“Alright, mom,” he says, seriously bummed he forgot to do that while it was still light outside.

He hates it, but he’s still afraid of the dark—especially the basement.

*I’m in sixth grade—everything’s cool*, he says to himself. But it doesn’t matter what he tells himself, the darkness still scares him. He feels it in his bones, like something cold and dark coming after him. It’s always been this way, as long as he can remember.

Another thing he doesn’t want to admit—he sort of hates when his mom goes to bed early because he has to shut off all lights and hurry down the dark hall to his bedroom—sometimes feeling something behind him—even if he knows there’s no such thing as scary monsters. But the basement is the worst—just the worst.

One of his chores is doing his laundry. He always does it during the day, when it’s still light out. But he was out riding bikes with his buddy and didn’t get back till dinner. And then his favorite show was on so he forgot all about his laundry.

And now it’s night.

The later it is, the scarier it feels to go down to the basement’s laundry room. It’s dark down there, really dark.

When his show’s over, he turns the TV up loud so he can still hear it when he goes downstairs. He thinks maybe if he can hear something from the real world, the nightmare world won’t find him.

It’s always the same feeling, the same exact feeling. Imagining something reaching out around the corner with its dark deadly arms and pulling him back down the stairs, so that he’ll

never make it back...not ever. His skin is already tingling when he gets to the top of the stairs, his heart starts to beat a little faster.

He psyches himself up and says, *C'mon, man, there's nothing down there*, as he heads down the basement stairs—but he can already feel it. There isn't a light for the stairs, so all he can see as he walks down the stairs is darkness. At the bottom of the stairs, to the left is a dark storage room filled with boxes, the moonlight slipping thru the basement half-window and casting creepy shadows. It's a room he hates going into, even during the day. To his right, it's four or five steps to the garage entrance. And just prior to the garage door he turns right and into the lightless laundry room, where a little metal chain for the overhead light hangs down.

Quickly, he moves to the light chain but because it's so dark he can't find it fast enough and stands there in the pitch dark, his hand hurriedly reaching above his head and making him more vulnerable to some kind of creature...some kind of something. The longer it takes him to find the light's pull chain the more scared he feels, the chill running up his body. He finally finds it and pulls the light on, just in time, just before the darkness overwhelms him.

To make matters worse, the lightbulb is a low wattage, dim yellow. It casts weird, floating shadows in the basement's cramped little laundry room. He knows the longer he's down there, the worse it gets. There's a dirty, spiderweb filled little half-window that's ground level to his left. At night, it looks like another planet out there.

He turns away from the little window—just as a pointy-eared little monster, not more than two feet tall, lowers its little head and peers around to see inside with its over-sized green eyes. A mouse is writhing in the creature's mouth as it bites down, blood dripping between its thin lips, slowly chewing the mouse. Seeing Tommy, it smiles a threatening little smile with sharp, bloody teeth, the mouse's tail still hanging dead from its mouth and reaches out with a

scaley little green hand, touching the window and slowly dragging its fingers across the glass, leaving slimy marks as the creature pulls back—out of sight. Tommy feels something, glances back to the window—but there’s nothing there.

His heart racing as a shiver passes through him from the basement’s cool, damp concrete. He throws his clothes in the dryer fast and closes the metal door as quietly as he can, imagining the sound of the dryer’s metal door awakens the dark creatures who know Tommy is there...*alone*.

The major bummer is there’s only the one light above him for the laundry room. So when he pulls the light chain everything goes dark—pitch dark. Immediately, he feels that same coolness of the basement in his bones and hurries out of the laundry room, makes a quick left and tries not to look in the dark storage room—but looks anyway. He always looks as he flies past, fearing that area of the basement most of all.

He’s never moved faster than when he flies up the stairs, feeling something behind him, almost touching the back of his neck. The chill in his bones and the cold dark presence makes him shiver again as his skin starts to tingle and crawl—knowing that something horrible could jump out, that something could be right behind him. He hates it. He hates all of it. He’s felt afraid of the dark his whole life—always feeling something, like something is there.

Taking the stairs two at a time and using the handrail to pull him up as fast as possible, he arrives at the top of the stairs and looks back, just to make sure nothing followed him up. *There’s nothing down there, Tommy*, he says to himself again, trying to be cool about it, but it never works...Tommy’s never been one of the cool kids.

“Honey, can you turn the TV down,” his mom calls out from her bedroom down the hall.

“Yeah...”

“It’s bedtime.”

“*Okay*, Mom.” He’s almost in seventh grade and hates it that he’s still told when it’s bedtime. He glances down the long hallway to his room, knowing it will be dark again when he shuts off the living room lights. At the end of the hall, he sees the light from under Mom’s door as he shuts off the big living room lamp and quickly pulls his hand out from under the lampshade.

Tommy turns back to the now dark hallway, and for just a moment, it seems to look like a black and white comic book—a long dark tunnel with strange little creatures climbing the walls and huge spiders hanging down—he shuts his eyes and when he opens them, everything looks normal again, the yellow light slipping out from under his Mom’s bedroom door. It’s weird, because Tommy often dreams in comic book images, but for just a moment, it wasn’t a dream—it was real.

Hurrying down the hallway and back in his room, he’s still not quite safe. He throws his clothes on the floor and over his desk chair. The bulb on the night table burned out yesterday and he forgot to get a new one. He flips off the light switch by his door and takes three big steps and jumps over that dark space underneath the bed—landing safely.

Later that night, Tommy’s fast asleep when a smoky dark presence gathers under his bed. The room is suddenly cold as the darkness takes shape as a long, slimy tentacle that’s dripping black ooze. It slowly reaches up from under his bed and wraps itself around Tommy’s blanket—slowly pulling it off him. Still asleep, Tommy reaches for the blanket and pulls it back up, curling underneath from the chilled room.

Again the creature slowly winds around and creeps back up, but this time it reaches toward Tommy’s head. The end of the black, slimy tentacle opens up like a dark flower with a

suction cup like mouth when Tommy suddenly wakes, sits up fast and looks around his room. For a split second, he thought he saw something...but there's nothing there.

He's mad at himself that he forgot to change the bedside table light. The new bulbs are in the closet just outside his door. But there's no way he's putting his feet back on the ground, not this late, not in the middle of the night—no way. He looks around one last time, notices the blanket is almost on the floor, pulls it back up and soon falls back into a deep, deep sleep.

## 2

At breakfast the next morning, Tommy says to his mom, "Today is bring something from home day."

"What are you taking?"

"Nothing."

"Why?"

"I don't know...don't feel like it."

"Well, okay. But it seems like you could take *something*?"

"You have to get up in front of the class and talk about it, Mom...I don't like doing that," he says, not mentioning that the girl he has a crush on is in that class and he doesn't want to look lame and dumb in front of her.

“Okay, honey, but you should tell your teacher the truth—that you feel uncomfortable in front of people right now. You’re going through some challenging things emotionally. I’m sure she’ll understand that.”

“Alright, Mom,” not wanting to talk about the divorce again.

“Hey, I meant to tell you, I was talking to Elizabeth’s mom last night—you know Elizabeth.”

“She’s a grade younger, but yeah.”

“She was saying that Elizabeth has been having a really hard time waking up in the morning, said she’s lethargic and can’t seem to organize her thoughts or words for an hour or so in the morning. Said she was almost...”

“Almost what..?”

“Well, I know she didn’t mean it literally, but she said almost zombie-like.”

“I mean, maybe she’s just not getting enough sleep?”

“That’s what I said but it’s something else. It’s really scaring her so she took Elizabeth to the doctor. They ran a bunch of tests—but everything’s normal.”

“Weird.”

“Yeah...kinda scary too,” she says, pouring herself another cup of coffee for the road, turning back to Tommy, “Hey...you’ve been feeling normal? Your sleep, I mean?”

“Yeah. I mean, whatever normal is.”

“You know what I mean, Tommy.”

“Yeah, Mom...I feel fine.”

“Okay, well, I’m running late,” she says, picking up her purse and work bag, “Don’t miss your bus.”



“I’ve still got a few minutes.”

“Have a good day at school. Love you, honey.”

“Love you too, Mom.”

Still sitting at the breakfast table, Tommy hears his mom close the garage door close and from the corner of his eye thinks he sees something move on the kitchen counter, thinks he hears something. When he glances over, everything seems normal. But he feels something, like something’s not right. He walks over to the counter and notices the toaster lever has been pushed down, like it’s making toast, like someone had pushed it down. Maybe his mom had meant to make him another piece of toast and just forgot?

When he looks more closely it suddenly *pops up* with a loud metal sound and he jumps back—his heart racing, feeling that weird, tingling feeling again, the same one he feels in the basement when he’s scared. Slowly, he steps back up and looks into the toaster and sees that it’s empty—no bread, no toast, no nothing.

*The bus!* He says out loud because, as usual, he’s lost track of time. Grabbing his bookbag and skateboard, he runs out the door and arrives at the bus stop down the block just as it pulls up. Climbing on board and settling in his seat, he looks back at his house. It’s weird, something feels different.

It’s one of those days in school that seems to last forever, like it’s never going to end. He’s kind of dreading his homeroom class, knowing he didn’t bring something to share with classmates, knowing he will feel embarrassed to admit that. Hurrying into class just after the last bell, his teacher gives him a look. Tommy’s never been the late type of student, he’s always on time. But since the divorce, something’s changed, he sometimes does things now he didn’t before—like being late to class.

Another student walks in after Tommy, moving slowly, like he can't quite see where he's going and bumps into the first row of desk as the Mrs. Williams asks, "Steven? Are you feeling okay?"

Steven looks back at her with a mostly blank expression and just stands there, then seems to remember where he is and walks back to his desk.

"*Steven?* Would you like to go to the nurse?"

"No...no I'm fine, Mrs. Williams...just tired I guess."

"Well, if you change your mind you can leave at any time. Okay?"

"Okay, Mrs. Williams," he says, staring at his hands with a strange expression, like he's not quite there.

"Okay, class—let's get started."

As always, Jenny Martinez is sitting in the front row with her long, dark hair. She's the girl he's always had a crush on, the kind of crush that keeps him from speaking or thinking clearly when he's around her—feeling awkward but also kind of supercharged.

It makes him feel weird and sort of silly but he can't help it, his feelings are just so overwhelming when he's near her. He's never felt this way about a girl and he thinks about her all the time. Mrs. Williams asks the class who would like to go first, who would like to share something from home. Jenny's super confident so she raises her hand and walks up to the front of the class. Tommy wishes he felt confident and comfortable in front of people—at least in front of her.