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GRAVEYARD GIRLS

1•2•3•4
I DECLARE A THUMB WAR



By New York Times best-selling authors

LISI HARRISON • DANIEL KRAUS



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**To all future final girls.
You've got this.**





CHAPTER I

SILAS HOKE

I've had my eye on these girls for a while now.

Sixth graders. Best friends. Consumed with their dramatic little lives.

I know their names: Whisper, Frannie, Sophie, and Gemma. I know who their families are. I know where they live. How did I learn all this?

How do you think?

Killers come in all shapes and sizes, but most have one skill in common.

The ability to creep up on you.

And I've been creeping.

The most delicious part is that these girls live in Misery Falls, Oregon.

The same place I lived.

The same place I died.

I know this town. Its corners. Its alleys. Its hiding spots. Most of all, its dead ends.

And Misery Falls is one giant dead end. Escape is impossible.

My miserable life was proof of that. So was my miserable death.

Once a month, these four girls get together for a good old-fashioned, up-all-night sleepover, during which one tells the others a “scary” story. They call themselves the Grim Sleepers.

Cute, right?

Wrong.

Their stories aren’t grim. And I won’t stand for cutesy substitutes that give a bad name to fear—the purest, most delicious emotion in the world.

They say they want to be scared, but do they really?

Can Whisper the track star outrun fear?

Will Frannie the actress perform bravely?

Is Straight A Sophie clever enough to outsmart *me*?

And then there’s Gemma, their leader. The only one who really believes in the supernatural. Smart girl—but

her so-called spirit guides are going to scatter when they sense my presence.

I'm going to give the Grim Sleepers something *real* to be afraid of.

Soon.

Very, very soon.





CHAPTER 2

WHISPER

It was all about atmosfear.

If Whisper Martin could make her bedroom darker than a closed casket and play an eerie song full of ghastly moans, the girls of the Grim Sleepers just might—a big *might*—forgive her last disaster.



A month ago, it had been Whisper's turn to host the sleepover, meaning it was her turn to tell a story so scary that Sophie, Frannie, and Gemma would beg to keep a light on at bedtime and fall asleep holding hands. There was just one problem: scary stories were, well, *scary*, and Whisper's life was already scary enough.

That's why she'd named her story "The Sensitive Spirit." It had zero to do with evil beings, bloodthirsty revenge, or ominous footsteps and everything to do with a twelve-year-old dead girl who took offense to the expression "pale as a ghost." Think: cautionary tale about the effects of negative body image.

Everyone said they appreciated the message. But that was all they appreciated.

"Maybe the sensitive spirit could *do* something," Sophie had said, "instead of walking around being sensitive the whole time."

Sophie Wexler was the picture of success, just like everyone else in the Wexler family. In class, Sophie liked to lean forward, ready to raise her hand first—always with the right answer. She used a mix of colorful hair bands to pull her flat-ironed curls away from her studious face. A face that had settled into its usual *I'm not judging, I'm helping* look.

"What do you mean, 'do something'?" Whisper had blurted.

Blurt was what Whisper did. Her tiny frame, thick glasses, pale skin, and beanies—always beanies, even in summer—made her look meek, and she was often overlooked. So, at a young age, she learned to speak

up. Way up. After years of being told to whisper, Willow Martin became known as Whisper Martin. Her name changed, but her vocal volume did not.

“I dunno,” Sophie had said. “Maybe something a little more . . . *creepy*?”

“But the sensitive spirit shared her secrets with a one-eyed cat. Isn’t *that* creepy?” Whisper blurted, again.

“I’ve got four words for you,” Frannie said. “*More drama and less trauma*.”

Frannie Vargas-Stein had a springy explosion of brown curls that bounced when she moved her arms. Which was *alllll* the time. *That’s what actors do*, Frannie often said. *We communicate with our entire body*. Frannie’s attitude was also a springy explosion. She’d wear anything and outperform anyone. The more people watching, the better.

“*More drama and less trauma* is five words,” Sophie had pointed out.

“It’s four. *And* is not a real word,” Frannie insisted.

“Since when?” Sophie asked.

“Since Pluto stopped being a planet.” Frannie flashed her stage-light smile. “I swear. Google it.”

“Google *this*!” Sophie chucked one of her precious pieces of candy corn at Frannie. It landed with a *donk* in the middle of Frannie’s forehead. Everyone cracked up except Whisper, who groaned.

“Tina wants to send out a joint holiday card. Her family *and* my family. Together,” Whisper said. “It’s going to say *Season’s Greetings from the Martins And the Pollards*. And the *and* was definitely capitalized.”

Tina.

Talk about scary. Whisper’s dad’s girlfriend had moved into the house nine months ago and was rapidly taking over every room. Sure, it had been five years since Jenny, Whisper’s mom and a beloved pastry chef, died. But did Tina really have to block Jenny’s pictures with her own? Whisper had begged her father to kick Tina out (three times!). But Miles, Whisper’s ten-year-old brother, was so excited to have a full-time playmate in Tina’s son, Rayne, that *he* begged to let them stay.

Of course, Miles won.

Worst of all, Tina had a daughter who also happened to be the scariest popular girl in Whisper’s class—a well-styled, vanilla-scented monster named Paisley Pollard. Yes, *that* Paisley Pollard. The one who drop-kicked Whisper’s Furby into a pile of fresh doggie doo back in first grade.

“Back to Whisper’s story,” Gemma had said. “I give it a two.”

Gemma had the sturdiness of a girl who grew up milking cows on a dairy farm—not restocking tarot cards at

the Spirit Sanctuary, the metaphysical supply shop owned by Gemma's mother and aunt. Golden skin, butter-blonde waves of hair, and the kind of eyes so icy blue, they might possibly see into other worlds. Which is exactly what Gemma tried to do. Spirits, ghosts, cryptids, reincarnation, ESP—you name it, Gemma believed it. And she was determined to make her best friends believe it, too.

"A two?!" Whisper had giggle-shouted. "It wasn't *that* bad, was it?"

Gemma was the creator of the Scream Scale, a one-to-ten rating system they used to rate Grim Sleepers stories. She had never rated anyone higher than a seven. But a two?

"That's—that's—that's lower than Frannie's story about the zombie cheerleaders!" Whisper had cried.

"'The Zom-Pom Girls.' Not my best effort," Frannie admitted.

"It's lower than Sophie's werewolf who couldn't stop laughing!"

"The story about the Were-LOLF," Sophie recalled ruefully. "I wrote it on the bus ride back from Model UN. It had been a long day solving global crises."

The good news was that Whisper's friends had voted to allow her the first do-over in Grim Sleepers history, and Whisper had gratefully accepted.



Fast-forward to now, one month later: Whisper was ready to roll. Her room was set and her look complete. Black eye shadow. Black fingernails. Black lipstick. And the coup de grâce—the official Grim Sleepers cloak.

Okay, it was a nubby hooded bathrobe, previously yellow but now dyed black. Gemma once said their cloaks looked “sad,” but Whisper, a nature-loving environmentalist, preferred “sustainable.”

Whisper checked her phone: 6:12 p.m. All gatherings started at exactly thirteen minutes past the hour. One time Gemma heard her mother call the number thirteen “the devil’s dozen” and thought it was super goose pimply. They all did.

Lights off, Whisper sat on her bed and waited for their signal. This was the spookiest part. Spindly branches tapped her window, each twig skeleton-gray in the moonlight.

Then a drop of blood hit the window glass. Whisper gasped, and her skin prickled. She knew it was the red light from Gemma’s laser pointer, but it jump-scared her every time.

Whisper lifted the hood of her cloak and hurried for the door, feet bare so Paisley and her friends wouldn’t hear her pass. They’d taken over the living room, same

as every Saturday night when Dad and Tina went out. It smelled like nail polish, Paisley's vanilla shampoo, and attitude. But their *sounds* bothered Whisper the most. *Click, clack, tick, tap*—their thumbnails beat against the keypads of their phones as they typed, liked, texted, and posted. It made Whisper think of cockroaches scuttling across a tin roof.

Chilly autumn air rushed inside when Whisper opened the front door to find three girls staring back at her. Dull eyes. No smiles. Hoods low. Still as cadavers. Dead leaves swirling around their black high-top sneakers. Even though they had done this dozens of times before, Whisper still thought her friends looked scary.

She wiggled her fingers, silently summoning them to follow her upstairs. Because of Gemma's strict no-talking-until-we-reach-the-bedchamber rule, Whisper added a head tilt, to warn them of Paisley and the ClikTok Squad. But when they tried to sneak past the living room, Whisper heard the unmistakable *ka-sss* of a phone camera.

“Look! It’s a poop parade!”

Paisley Pollard. Twelve going on insufferable. Wearing her mother's lavender silk pajamas and maroon Dr. Martens. Laughing, displaying the space between her front teeth that sixth-grade boys mysteriously thought was hot.

“Uh, nice costumes, but Hoke Week doesn’t start until Monday, freaks.”

Miranda Young.

Whisper imagined Frannie’s curls tightening like coiled snakes.

Frannie and Miranda had been best friends and theater buddies until fourth grade. Then, thanks to “the incident,” they became best enemies. Whisper had asked Frannie for details a billion times, but Frannie never talked about it. “I’ll tell you someday,” she’d say in that breathless way of hers. Like some weary old Hollywood actress who had seen a thing or two but was too tired to dish.

Not that Whisper blamed Frannie for taking issue with Miranda. For one thing, the girl wore yellow-tinted sunglasses. Indoors. At night. She said the tinted lenses blocked harmful blue light from her phone, thereby saving her precious violet-blue eyes from becoming basic brown—you know, like Frannie’s.

“I can’t believe we have a whole week of events for some dead psycho,” Paisley muttered, then returned to her phone. “This town is tragic. And you four are *extra* trag—”

“I like Hoke Week.”

The comment came from the third girl in the living room, Zuzu Otsuka. Japanese American. Sleek

shoulder-length hair with a bold purple streak, the kind that skim eyelashes and hide secrets. She was rocking camouflage drop-crotch pants, an intentionally ripped cashmere sweater, and reflective gold sneakers. No surprise there. Her parents owned Jōhin—a boutique clothing and accessories brand based in Misery Falls and worn by all the most influential influencers.

Zuzu wasn't just the Otsukas' daughter. She was their social media muse.

And just like she did in so many marketing posts, Zuzu was popping her trademark cinnamon gum. Whisper was certain she could smell it from across the room.

Pop!

“I guess Hoke Week *is* kind of nostalgic,” Paisley allowed.

“I bet the Turd Herd will be there,” Miranda said loudly enough for the Grim Sleepers to hear.

Paisley snorted. “Turd Herd. Ohmigod. I’m so posting that.”

“Not if I post it first!” Miranda laughed.

Click, clack, tick, tap.

Whisper wanted to shout, *I hope your thumbs fall off!* Shouting, after all, was what she did best. But Gemma’s vow of silence was an ironclad rule.

Whisper did have another talent. Two months into sixth grade and she was already one of the top runners on Misery Falls Middle School's track team, with Coach Redmond choosing her to anchor every relay race. So, she'd use that talent now and run away from these keypad-melting villains before she blurted something she'd regret.

Cheeks scorching and heart revving, Whisper lowered her head and raced upstairs. The clatter of texting and the popping of Zuzu's gum chased her the whole way.



Meet Whisper, Frannie, Sophie, Gemma, and Zuzu— five friends who tell eerie tales by night and navigate middle school drama by day.

Misery Falls, Oregon, is abuzz as the 100th anniversary of the electrocution of the town's most infamous killer, Silas Hoke, approaches. When a mysterious text message leads the girls to the cemetery—where Silas Hoke is buried!—life can't get any creepier. Except, yes, it can thanks to the surprise storyteller who meets them at the cemetery, inspires the first-ever meeting of the Graveyard Girls, and sets the stage for a terrifying tale from Whisper that they'll never forget.

This slightly scary, extremely addictive story is the first in a five-book series by *New York Times* best-selling authors Lisi Harrison and Daniel Kraus.

LISI HARRISON, the queen of teen comedy, has written 37 YA and middle grade novels including *Monster High* and the #1 *New York Times* best-selling series *The Clique*, which has sold more than eight million copies. Lisi launched two new middle grade series in 2021, *Girl Stuff* and *The Pack*. She lives in California. Visit her at lisiharrison.com.

DANIEL KRAUS is a *New York Times* best-selling horror author and co-author of both *Trollhunters* and *The Shape of Water* with Guillermo del Toro. His work has been translated into over 25 languages. Daniel lives in Illinois. Visit him at danielkraus.com.

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