





# The girl and the ghosts

By Helena Vadbunker



Last Tuesday. We moved in for good two weeks ago but last Tuesday was special. It was the day I realized that Maddie Buener is just not what she seems. Some people say she's simply different. I'd say she's not even human. You could see the sun bouncing off her perfect curly hair from miles away. Oh how I wished to prove she wasn't innocent, even if it was just to one person. Peering out the window I would always see faint green glows bursting across the brick wall. I knew she was up to something but nobody would ever listen. "Will you please sit down, Chloe," my dad said with a deep sigh. I could've sworn I saw something strange in maddie's backyard but I slumped back down in my chair anyways. I picked at the icy food on my plate disappointed in what was there. My dad laid his head on the table, stacks of overdue bills sprawled out everywhere. I silently sat up and ate the food in fear that any little mistake I made would cause him stress. He looked up and noticed I was staring so he wiped his tears and put on his "I don't want you to be sad too, so I'm faking happiness" smile. "What's wrong?" I asked. "It's nothing," he whispered as I stood up and disappeared down the hallway.

I flopped down on my bed and took out my tattered sketchbook. The lines shaped a blurred vision of what I imagined to be on the other side of the wall. Me on one side with my beige trenchcoat and magnifying glass and maddie on the other with her purple witch hat and her mysterious figures that danced in the light. I hadn't slept in a while so I was tired. Mostly it was the new place. All the lights and the sounds kept me awake at night but also the mesmerizing shadows outside my bedroom window. Maddie had been experimenting again. Her evil spirits and magic and witchcraft were just so confusing. I couldn't grasp a perfect view of what lies beyond the wall either which only left more questions. I decided it would be best to figure out myself what was really going on and prove to people that I'm not crazy.

The next morning I woke up early. The world was quiet and when I stepped outside the cold dew on the grass soaked my feet. The smell of rain drenched wood and crisp sap tickled my nose as the brick wall drew closer. I could feel the anticipation. All the excitement until the moment I tossed my camera over the wall and tugged back on the rope, only to feel disappointment strike



me. There was nothing beyond the wall except scattered sticks and a glass door leading into maddie's house. It seemed that she had not yet awoken from her slumber. Her room was dark and no shadowy figures pranced across the neon pink and purple walls. The trip outside was completely useless. The sun peeked over the horizon and I ran inside just as the rusty school bus pulled up to my stop.

I hopped on and took a seat close to the front. I could see the top of maddie's sparkly blue backpack shining on the ceiling from the back of the bus. Her shadow friend was there too but no one else seemed to notice or care. I pulled the magnifying glass out of my bag to get a closer look but it fell and cracked as we turned the sharp corner. The shattered glass popped on the floor, bursting into loud fireworks. I swepted it up and shoved it in my coat pocket. We had pulled up to the school when Maddie vanished. Her sparkly bag, her curly hair, her ghosts, they were all no longer on the bus. They just disappeared like that. "You saw maddie on the bus right?" I asked Grace. Grace was Maddie's best friend so if anyone was sitting with Maddie it would have been her. "I haven't seen her all morning," she said. "I heard she was walking today".

"I know I saw her though," I said.

"Well you didn't, Okay?" She exclaimed. "She's not here now and hasn't been here today so just leave me alone". I could tell she was upset by the pain in her voice. It was sharp like needles. Other people get the rose side of her. The sweet flower part that's filled with love and sugar. All that is left for me are the rotten thorns that get sharper and stiffer the more you stab at them. I walked into the school by myself this morning. I haven't made a lot of friends since my family moved. We don't have a lot of money like the other kids either which turns people away. The beads on my shoelaces bounced and clinked as I trudged up the stairs to my locker. I was still so convinced that I saw Maddie on the bus that not even Grace and her rotten mood could change my mind. I threw my bag into the locker grabbing my spy notebook and my dusty red



and purple math book as the first bell rang. Running to class I saw a ghost wave at me. I skipped into the classroom and turned around only to find Maddie Buener coming in behind me. I could see the magic calling me from out the window. Flashes and blurs in the air. "Look, do you guys see that?" I asked.

"See what?" someone questioned.

"That, outside the window," I repeated

"Pay attention class," said Mrs Sanders.

"I think crazy Chloe is just losing her mind," someone yelled from the back of the room. They all snickered.

"No, you just don't get it!" I screamed, my face steaming hot. The tears welled up inside of my tired, burning eyes. "Why won't you believe me?" I sobbed.

"What is going on with you today Chloe?" said Mrs. Sanders. "I'm going to have to have a talk with your parents after school". Upon hearing those words my heart dropped. My next three classes were spent worrying. I bit my lip until the skin was plucked away and my face was blush red. I fiddled with my hands while I waited for my parents to come to the school. My fingers were sore by the time they arrived and when they walked in there was nothing but the hum of the broken air conditioner. The conference room smelled like overpowering perfume and the scent of old hand sanitizer.

We sat at the table in silence. I was afraid to say a word. My parents were stressing over a lot of things since the move but my problems were now theirs too. I knew I was in big trouble now.

The unsettling silence and strict looks made that very clear.

"I guess we can start now," said my mom.

"Would you like me to give her a detention for her disruptive behavior?" asked Mrs. Sanders.

"We actually had other plans in mind," my dad explained. "We think it's best if we put her detective kit away for a while". My mom slowly nodded in agreement. "We want to believe you Chloe, we do," said my mom. "But the excuses never stop". "We've been thinking about you



making up all these stories about silly magic and some crazy ghosts that nobody else can see".

"I think if we take it away you'll be less curious." "Plus we agreed that you should get to know Maddie," my dad said. "Maybe then you will see that she is just a normal girl like you".

When we got home I stomped to my room. "You're going over to Maddie's house right now," my mom said. I couldn't refuse because I was already in a lot of trouble so I put on my coat and went outside. I walked around the bushes and fence to Maddie's doorstep. I rang the doorbell and her mom invited me in. I was led to Maddie's room and her mom went back to wash the dishes. I tiptoed through the door to see Maddie's angry glare. I stared at my beaded shoelaces, my eyes locked on the floor. "Hi," I said. I could barely look her in the eyes. "Look I-"

"I know you're only here to accuse me Chloe".

"No that's not why I'm here," I sighed. "I'm sorry for blaming you for my imagination and your witchcraft."

"It's okay," she lied. "But do you want to see the truth?"

"Sure," I said in a small voice. We walked to the basement and she pulled out her spellbook and mumbled a few gibberish words. Her ghost appeared. It was white and cloudy like flour but it looked friendly and less frightening than I imagined. "I've been practicing my magic," she giggled. I chuckled too. We laughed together for hours until our parents yelled for us to come to dinner. "Bye," she squealed.

"Wait, I just have one more question Maddie," I said. "Will I see you tomorrow?" "I thought we could go to the magic store or -"

"I'd like that," she whispered. We smiled as I walked back out into the foggy evening. I thought about our new friendship that I believed could never happen. I looked up in Maddie's window and saw her standing by her bed. "Bye!" I yelled. I still had many questions about Maddie but one thing between us was clear. We were now best friends. Satisfied, I ran inside to the view of the gleaming stars above my head and a new and improved (and not as lonely) me.