



THE

VAMPIRE

BEWITCHED

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The deadly vampires are back. And this time, they want your memories . . .

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About the Author  
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## About the Book

*My name's Tallulah, and I have a secret: together with my friend Marcus, I hunt down deadly, vicious vampires.*

But something strange has happened to Marcus. He was in a mysterious accident, and now he's lost his memory. He can't remember anything about our vampire fighting days. There's something seriously sinister and suspicious about it. And I reckon it's got something to do with the weird new horror shop that's just opened up in town . . .

A frighteningly funny new story starring Tallulah, Marcus and Gracie from multi-award-winning author Pete Johnson.

# THE VAMPIRE BEWITCHED



RHCP DIGITAL

This story is dedicated to my nephew, Adam,  
who thinks he'd make a cool half-vampire.

I think he would too!

# PROLOGUE

Someone is about to disappear.

Me.

By the time you read this I will have vanished. You might see my body roaming about, might even believe it's me, but it won't be. After tonight, the me who's writing this to you just won't exist any more.

I am under a slow-acting, but deadly spell. And there's nothing I can do to stop it. I am totally trapped.

All evening everyone's been expecting me to get hysterical and burst into tears. But I don't do crying. Not even now. And it isn't because I'm the least bit brave, but because all my tears are frozen inside me. I'm still numb with shock and terror. That is my only protection from the horror about to envelop me.

As I write this, it's pitch dark outside – long after midnight. I am in a bedroom I've never slept in before, and I can't make too much noise, in case I wake up the person sleeping in the other bed.

I suppose I could go downstairs. But I'd just have people pretending to be cheerful – or looking at me so pityingly.

Yet sleep is miles away. And I have to do something. So I've decided I shall tell you my incredible story. That way, at least a little part of me will go on existing.

Firstly, though, I have an important warning for you. Once it was fine to keep your head in the sand and pretend vampires didn't exist. For until recently vampires stayed away from humans. In real life, you see, they don't even like human blood. It's far too sour for them – they actually live off animal blood instead.

But now – and please listen carefully to what I’m telling you – there is a new sect, known as *the deadly vampires*. They have discovered that however repulsive they find the taste of human blood, if drunk in large enough quantities, it can give them undreamed-of new powers – while totally draining humans of their strength and energy, of course.

They are the most dangerous vampires in the whole world, and they believe their days in the shadows are over. They want to bring back the vampire glory days.

And the first demonstration of their amazing new powers took place here in Great Walden, the village where I live, just a few months ago.

So who am I? I should have told you sooner. Sorry, but my head is all over the place tonight. I’m Tallulah. I’m thirteen years old and I’m a bit of a weirdo. Ask anyone. And I don’t care. Well, who wants to be normal and ordinary? Not me. By the way, I’m also a total loner. For most of my life I’ve never had a single friend.

But I didn’t need friends. Instead, I lived in a dream world of books and comics and films, and all about one thing: the wildest and most twisted outsiders of all – *vampires*. Before I knew they were real, I was obsessed with them. And I had an open mind about something which most humans will never even consider, namely the possibility of another world existing apart from the obvious, totally tedious one around us. Kind of ironic now, I suppose.

I’d always had the strangest feeling that there was another reality – and vampires were a massive part of it. But even I never expected the insanely dull village where I live to become a war zone.

Pitched on one side were the deadly vampires.

On the other were just three people – me, a vampire expert called Cyril, and Marcus.

Marcus is the total opposite to me. I’m hard to like. He’s practically impossible to dislike. He’s the kind of cheeky schoolboy who is always making you laugh from the back

row of the classroom, lighting up even the most boring lesson.

Marcus will hate me telling you this next bit. But once, late at night, I heard Cyril and him having a big argument (which was very strange in itself, as Marcus hardly ever gets mad). Cyril was saying that he thought Marcus might be a half-vampire, or have relatives who were. Marcus got really angry and said he didn't even know what half-vampires were. (In case you don't, they're completely peaceful and friendly, living alongside humans but never revealing their secret identity. They don't ever drink human blood, and they are the enemy of true, evil vampires. They can also shape-change into bats, and some of them have other extra gifts.)

Later, when I asked Marcus about this, he got furious all over again and denied it once more.

But sometimes I wonder . . .

Anyway, when we battled the deadly vampires before, Marcus and I were in great danger, but it was a magic kind of danger, binding us together. We ended up defeating them and saving the world (not that the world ever knew) and I'd made my first ever friend.

Best time of my life, no question. Especially when Marcus asked me out. I never thought a boy would ever do that. Or that I'd ever want to go out with a boy. But I did, even though I said 'No' to Marcus at first. Well, it took me by surprise, him asking me out - and on the ghost train, of all places. But I thought I'd have plenty of time to reverse that decision.

Only I didn't.

Marcus's family had to move to Paris for a few months and of course he had to go with them.

And as if that wasn't bad enough, I became really ill. No doctor could tell me what was wrong, and I couldn't shake it off either. So in the end I had to go away to a special hospital, called a sanatorium, and be a human guinea pig

(*'Just one more test, Tallulah'*) for weeks and weeks. Maddening beyond belief.

Especially as all the time I was wondering what the deadly vampires were planning next. We'd only won the first round, after all.

But at last the sanatorium told me they'd tried all the tests they could think of, and I was allowed to leave. They even let me out three days early - on Easter Saturday. Meanwhile, I'd also heard from Marcus that he had just arrived home from Paris. That was marvellous news, as I so wanted to see him again.

And this is where my story really begins - and ends.

# **PART ONE**

***Tallulah***

# CHAPTER ONE

## *A Horrible Surprise*

When I arrived home from the sanatorium I got such a strange reaction from my family. They were actually quite pleased to see me. I kept looking behind to see if someone else had walked in with me.

You see, I'm the black sheep of the family – but you've guessed that already. Still, it's hard not to be when you've got an older brother, Martin, who is in the opinion of everyone – not least himself – a genius. And a younger sister, Glynis, who's won prizes for dancing, swimming, gymnastics, even gardening. And if they gave out awards for being adorable she'd snap up every one of them. She's managed to fool everybody – except me.

Who on earth could live up to those two?

Well, I don't even bother to try.

But that night I had to endure a family meal to celebrate my return. There was Dad booming questions at me (and not really listening to any of the answers, of course), Mum trilling, 'Aren't we having fun,' every five seconds, and me hemmed in like a prisoner between Glynis and Martin for two whole hours of my life that I'll never get back.

But finally, finally I was able to jump up from the table and say, 'I'm just going out for a bit.'

'Wherever are you going?' asked Mum at once.

'Only down the road to see Marcus,' I said, as casually as I could.

'She's going all red,' cooed Glynis in her delightful way.

‘But must you go tonight?’ cried Mum. ‘You’ve been very ill, you know.’

‘Yeah, bring that up as often as possible, Mum. It really cheers me up.’

‘You must wrap up,’ went on Mum.

‘I’m not leading an expedition to Antarctica,’ I muttered.

Then Dad announced I had to be home in just forty minutes from now. Hardly any time at all. But it was still going to be brilliant, especially as I hadn’t even texted Marcus to say I was coming back. So what a top surprise he’d get when he saw me standing on his doorstep, three days earlier than expected.

After I rang Marcus’s doorbell my heart began beating really fast, as if I’d run twenty miles to get here, not walked for about five minutes. There was silence at first. Then I heard these shuffling movements.

A shiver ran up my spine – without me knowing why.

Seconds later the door opened and there was Marcus, giving his usual goofy grin but also leaning on a walking stick. That was a shock. But I was so happy to see him that I wouldn’t have cared if he’d been holding onto ten walking sticks.

Then I gave Marcus a big hug. Or rather, I started to, until I noticed my hug was a bit one-sided. Marcus was merely patting me a little as if I were a stray dog who’d turned up at his door. He was also gaping at me in a totally bewildered way.

I stepped back from him. ‘I wanted to surprise you, and I see I have.’

Marcus replied, ‘I loved the hug. Thanks very much. But who exactly are you?’

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Memory Loss*

Marcus makes jokes the way most of us breathe in and out. He just can't stop doing it. But to pretend he didn't even know who I was? That wasn't remotely funny, especially as I'd been so looking forward to this reunion. He'd spoiled everything.

And then I had a really horrible thought. Being in a sanatorium doesn't exactly enhance your looks. That's why I'd totally avoided looking at myself lately. But I knew I was much thinner, and my skin was deathly white and all zitty. So was Marcus saying he just didn't like me any more?

'Have I changed very much?' I asked.

'No,' he began. 'Well, actually I don't know if you've changed or not. The thing is, I've been sucked back in time.'

'What!?'

'Yeah, flung back a whole six and a bit months to September the twenty-ninth - the day before my thirteenth birthday.'

This whole conversation was getting stranger and stranger.

'Marcus, what on earth are you talking about?'

He cleared his throat as if he were about to deliver a little speech. 'You see this walking stick? Well, it isn't my latest fashion accessory. Not long after I got home from Paris, I was knocked off my bike. And I went flying over the handlebars. *Not* a great way to travel.'

'Sounds painful,' I said.

‘It was. The driver said something flew right into his windscreen – like a giant bird or bat, and that’s why he didn’t see me.’

‘A bat,’ I echoed. I didn’t like the sound of that at all.

‘Well, that’s what he claimed. Anyway, I’ve bumped my head so badly it’s shaken out everything that’s happened to me since my thirteenth birthday. So I can’t remember that birthday or Christmas, or anything I did at school this term, or last term after September the twenty-ninth. And Mum insists I use this stick in case anything *else* happens, even though I can walk perfectly OK.’

‘You’re saying you’ve lost your memory – or six months of it.’

‘Exactly, and if you see those six months anywhere about – I’d like them back.’ He grinned a bit awkwardly. ‘Actually, this doctor who’s been looking after me, Dr Jasper, says memory blackouts aren’t as unusual as you might think. But the really annoying thing is, people can’t just fill me in on what I’ve got up to in my missing months. Apparently it’s much better if I let my memory repair itself. And soon I’ll remember everything again.’

‘How soon?’

‘Dr Jasper said normal service should be resumed any day now. Bit of a shock for you hearing all this.’

‘Yeah,’ I agreed. ‘Still, even worse one for you.’

‘Just a temporary blip, honestly,’ he said firmly. ‘Anyway, look, come in . . . er, sorry, what’s your name?’

To be telling Marcus – *Marcus* – my name was beyond odd. I tried to make a little joke of it all. ‘Me Tallulah.’

‘Cool name. Well, look, Tallulah, I’ll crack open the Tic-tacs and maybe if we talk for a bit – well, who knows what I’ll start remembering.’

I sat down in Marcus’s kitchen while he made me a cup of coffee. He said, ‘If it’s any consolation, another girl came round here yesterday who I’d never seen in my life before either. Only I had. I know her very well, apparently.’

‘Was it Gracie?’

‘Yeah, do you know her?’

‘A bit, yeah.’

Gracie didn’t go to our school. Her mum and dad were friends with Marcus’s parents, and that’s how she and Marcus knew each other.

‘She’d even bought me a little present for when I got back from Paris. A cute little dog. Not a real one, of course – just a china one like an ornament. Still, its eyes actually light up at night.’

So Gracie was buying him presents. I couldn’t help feeling a stab of jealousy.

Then I said, ‘Actually, we knew each other before your memory blackout on September the twenty-ninth. I was a new girl at your school. I’d only been there for a few weeks.’

Marcus whirled round. ‘Of course.’

‘You remember me,’ I said eagerly.

‘I remember you joining our school. I just didn’t make the connection before, because today you smiled at me and seemed all sane and nice – while at school . . .’ He hesitated.

‘I was insane and horrible.’

‘No, you terrified me, though.’

‘I didn’t.’

‘You totally did – you had rows with just about everyone, didn’t you?’

I grinned faintly.

‘Even some of the teachers were shaking.’

‘You’re exaggerating now.’

‘I’m not, and that’s why I never spoke to you. I thought, *She’ll eat me alive*. But now we’re actually good friends?’

‘Don’t sound so amazed.’

‘I’m not.’

‘Come on, you are,’ I said.