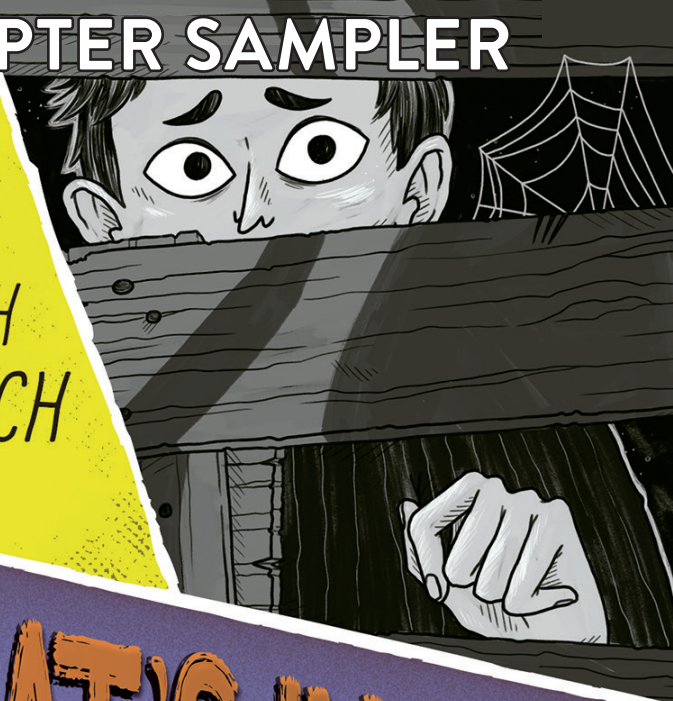


CHAPTER SAMPLER

SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRATCH



WHAT'S IN THE WALLS



JULIE
CHAMPAGNE

TRANSLATED BY DAVID WARRINER

ILLUSTRATED BY
GENEVIÈVE
BIGUÉ

—CHAPTER SAMPLER—

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What's in the Walls?

By Julie Champagne

Illustrated by Geneviève Bigué

Translated from the French by David Warriner



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—CHAPTER SAMPLER—



—CHAPTER SAMPLER—



—CHAPTER SAMPLER—

This is a true story. And it isn't something that happened to my neighbor's sister's cousin. It happened to me, Zack Berry. It happened a few years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. I'm telling you my story now to give you a warning. If you hear a weird sound in the walls, be afraid. Be very afraid.

—CHAPTER SAMPLER—

THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE

It was dark in the school gym, and I was all alone. I was in the storage room in the corner, putting the floor-hockey gear away. As captain of the team, that was my job.

I took my job seriously. I was ten years old, after all! I never noticed the smell of stale sweat and damp in that old room, not anymore. I certainly wasn't thinking about that. I was replaying the highlights of the game we'd just played. The score was 3–2. Our school lost, but we could be proud of how we'd played.

I was halfway up the stepladder, about to put the bibs on the top shelf, when I heard a strange sound.

sccccccrrrrriiittttch

At first I thought it must be our gym teacher. She had gone to make a phone call. Maybe she was back already.

“Mrs. Clark?” I called.

No answer. My ears must have been playing tricks on me. I came down from the ladder to separate the right-handed sticks from the left-handed ones. My movements were slower than usual. I was listening for the slightest sound. I guess I wanted to reassure myself that there was no one else there. But this time I knew I wasn’t imagining things. There it was again, the sound. A soft scratching sound. Quieter than a whisper.

sccccccrrrrriiittttch

sccccccrrrrraaattttch

sccccccrrrrriiit++ch
 sccccccrrrrraagt++ch

I tried to keep calm and told myself there was a logical reason for the sound. St. Joseph's was an old school. It was nearly a hundred years old. A little creaking and cracking must be normal.

TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP

But this wasn't a creaking or cracking sound. Now it sounded more like tapping. It sounded like

something was moving around very quickly. There was something in the room, I was sure of it. But I still couldn't see anything.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. This was weird, and it was creepy, but it wasn't dangerous, I figured. It couldn't be. After all, I was in a safe place, with adults not far away. A storage room next to a school gym wasn't exactly the scene of a horror movie.

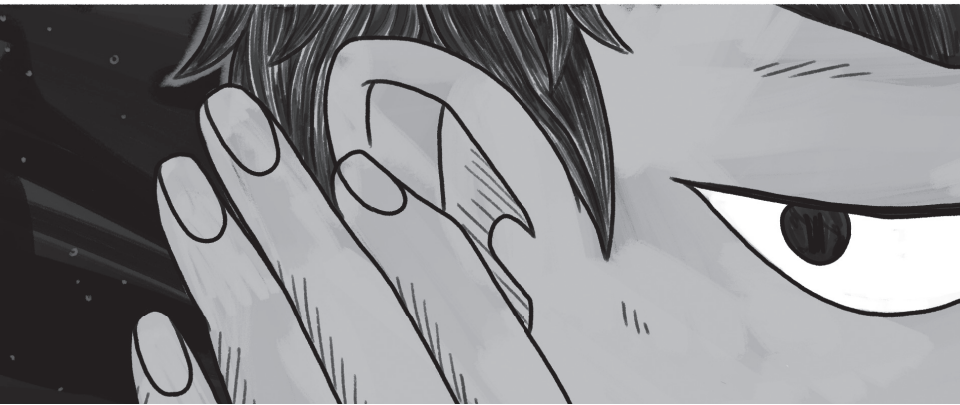
There must be an explanation, I told myself. I put the hockey sticks down on the floor, then left the room. I went out into the gym and stood near the basketball net.

I pressed my ear to the wall. All I could hear was my own heartbeat. I held my breath. Then I jumped when I heard a door slam.

It was my best friend, Henry. He came over with a curious smirk on his face. "Why are you hugging the wall?"

"Ha ha, very funny. I heard a weird sound." I put my finger in front of my lips to tell him to keep quiet.

We waited. Five seconds. Twenty seconds. Two hundred and thirty-four thousand and one seconds or something like that.



I was about to give up and tell Henry I must have been imagining things when the scratching started again.

scCCCCCrrrrriiit+tttch

SCCCCCCCCCrrr

TAP TAP

TAP TAP TAP

TAP TAP TAP

raaaat+txch

TAP TAP TAP

TAP TAP

TAP TAP

Henry's eyes bugged out. He wasn't smiling now.