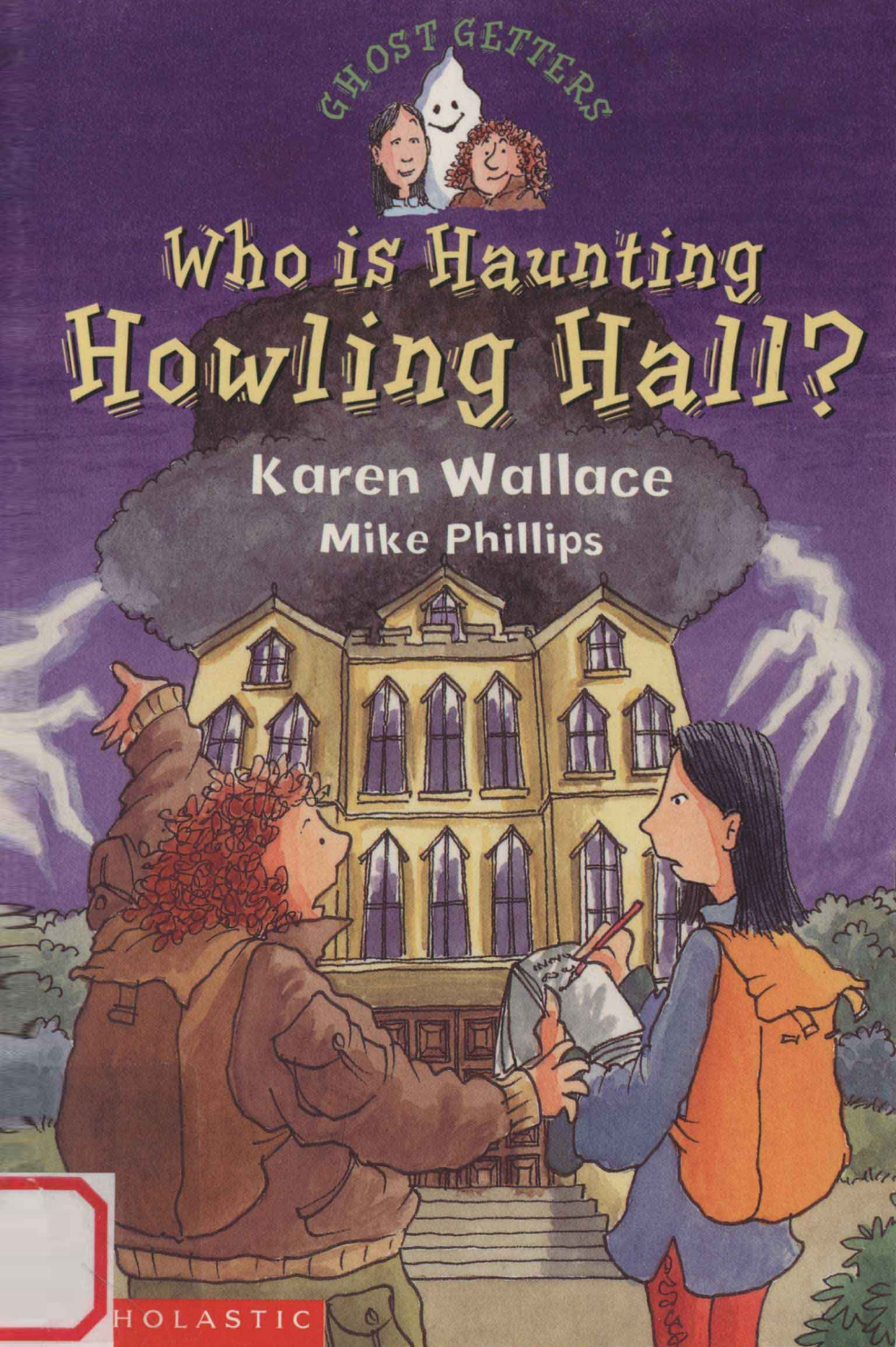


GHOST GETTERS



# Who is Haunting Howling Hall?

Karen Wallace  
Mike Phillips



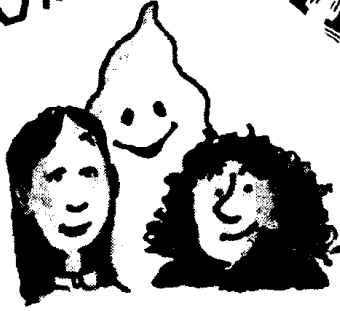
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**Who is Haunting  
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# GHOST GETTERS



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# Who is Haunting Howling Hall?



Karen Wallace  
illustrated by Mike Phillips

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# Chapter One

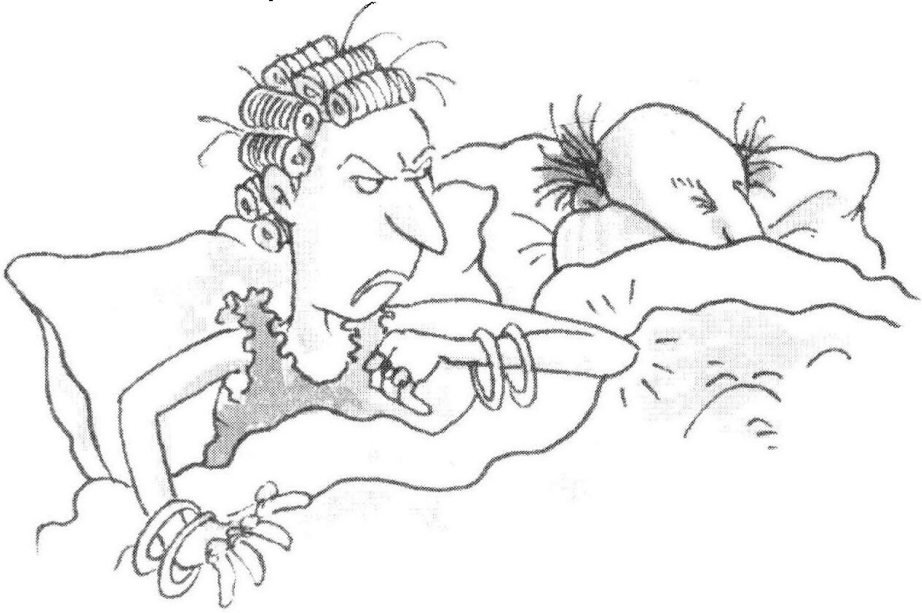


Ritzi Clawback tossed and turned in her sleep. She was having a terrible nightmare. She dreamed she was dressed only in her black frilly nightdress, trapped inside a huge, echoing cave on a roller coaster. She opened her mouth to scream but suddenly there was an ear-splitting howl just above her head. Ritzi sat up, with her heart banging so hard she thought it would pop out of her chest. Her nightmare was real!

The heavy wooden four-poster bed she lay in swooped and dipped like a roller coaster. Ritzi clutched the bedpost and shouted at the top of her voice but the howling was so loud, she couldn't hear herself. Beside her, her husband, Rick Clawback, squeezed his eyes shut and moaned in his sleep. It was as if he was trying desperately hard not to wake up.



“WAKE UP!” yelled Ritzi, jabbing him in the ribs with a sharp elbow. “Wake up and DO SOMETHING!” She stared at him with furious red eyes.



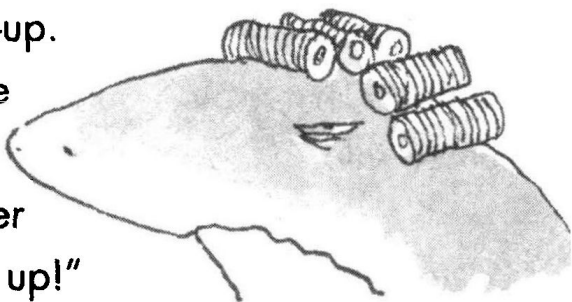
From the moment they had bought Howling Hall every night had been the same. Not only was Ritzi losing her beauty sleep, but with all the tossing and turning, her unbelievably expensive LOOKYOUNGFOREVER night cream was wiped off her face before it had a chance to work. At this rate, she would never look young again.



Although the truth was that Ritzi didn't look young at all. She had a face like a saggy shark, which she plastered in dark-beige make-up.

Ritzi jabbed the sleeping lump beside her, harder this time. "Wake up!"

she yelled again. She was about to grab a handful of Rick's thick black hair when she remembered he always took it off at night, so she twisted his ear instead.



"Gerroff," snarled Rick, furiously. Ritzi wasn't the only one losing her beauty sleep. Rick always thought of himself as a handsome hulk type. Now the bags under his eyes had turned into suitcases and his forehead was covered in so many lines, it looked like a road map.



"Gerroff," he said again. "It's not my problem. It was your idea to buy this dump in the first place."

"No, it wasn't."

"Yes, it was." Rick glared at his wife's red-eyed face. He wondered if he looked as terrible as she did. The bed spun round in a full circle and came to a stop in the middle of the room. Everything went silent.

"We've got to face it," muttered Ritzi. "We're not talking earth tremors, here. This place is haunted."

“So what am I supposed to do?” snapped Rick.  
“I’m a property developer, not a ghost buster.”

Ritzi reached into her bedside cupboard and pulled out a copy of the *Yellow Pages*.  
“Then find someone who is!” she shouted.  
“We’ve got to get rid of them!”

“All right. All right,” muttered Rick.  
“Anything to shut you up.”



He flipped open the book and ran his fingers down the page. Between GENERATORS and GIFT SHOPS was a big boxed ad. “I’ve got it!”

Ritzi poked out her head from under the blankets. “Got what?”

“The answer, of course.” He read out the ad.

“GHOST GETTERS – WE HUNT DOWN  
WHAT HAUNTS YOU! NO JOB TOO BIG  
OR TOO SMALL!”

But Ritzi didn't reply. The shadow of a  
huge, terrifying bat flapped over her face.

She fell backwards and her head hit the  
back of the bed with a dull thud.

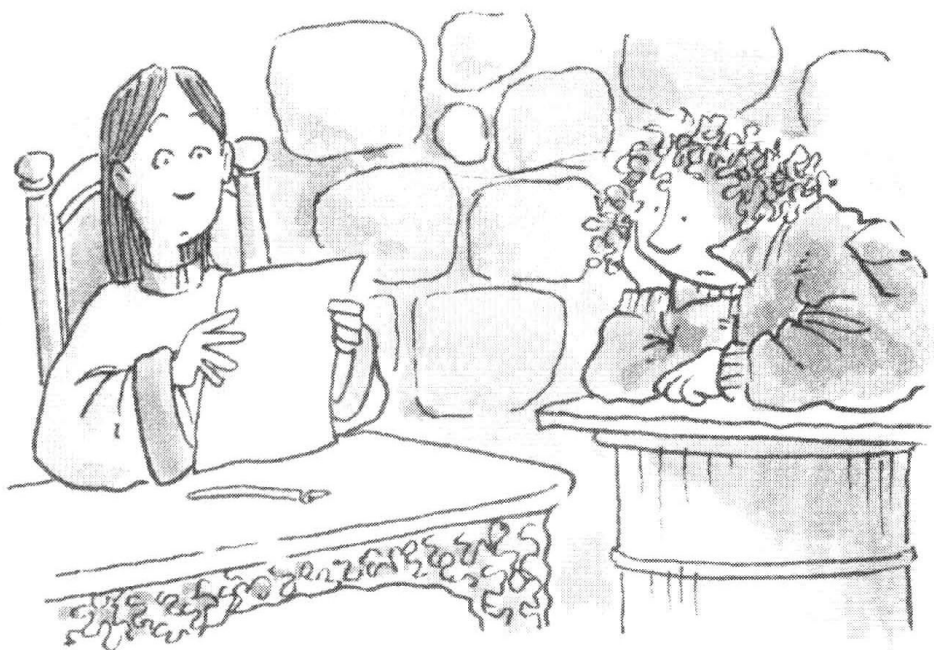


Lily Typhoon sat at her tiny silver desk and stared at a piece of paper with the words *Ghost Getters* written in big spidery letters across the top. There were two columns of figures on the paper. One was very long and the other was very short. The long column had MONEY OUT written at the top. MONEY IN was written at the top of the short one. In fact the short one was so short, there wasn't a single figure on it. Lily Typhoon pushed back her thick black hair and sighed.

Across the room behind a desk made from planks and oil drums, Bertha Truncheon rested her wide green-eyed face on her meaty fists. "Bad news?"

"Couldn't be worse," said Lily. "If Ghost Getters doesn't get a new customer today, we'll have to shut up shop." She forced a brave smile on to her pretty, fine-featured face. "We're broke."

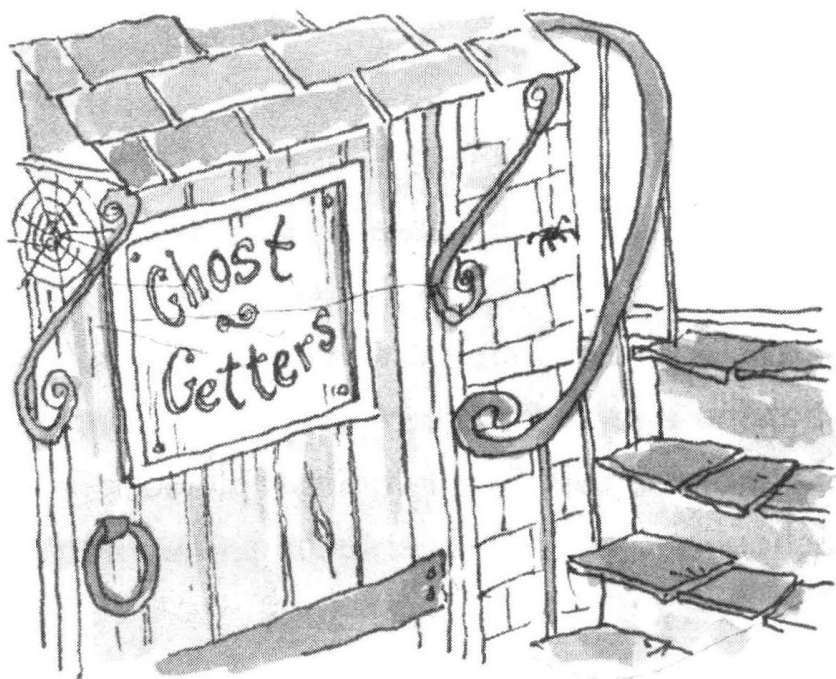
Bertha slammed down her fists, making the planks jump on their drums. A comforting booming noise filled the small office.



“But how can we be? That ghost I tracked down on the building site was an enormous job.”

Lily looked at the figures again. It wasn't that she and Bertha didn't work hard. From the moment they had left Ghost Hunting School and set up Ghost Getters, they had been very busy.

At first the money had rolled in and they had bought a basement office and turned it into a dungeon. They put in stone walls and covered them in patches of moss. The stairs were specially carved from hand-broken flagstones and horribly slimy. To get inside, customers had to push through the finest silk cobwebs and open a stiff creaky door. The Ghost Getters office looked as if it had been there for hundreds of years and was exactly the sort of place you might find a skeleton or at least a skull and some armour.



But even though Lily and Bertha had worked hard, everything had cost time and money. And now they had run out of both...

Suddenly there was an eerie howling and the screech of rusty iron against stone.

There was somebody at the door.

They had a customer!

Ten minutes later, Rick Clawback sat back on a carved oak chair in the Ghost Getters office and folded his arms. "So that's the picture."

"Problem, you mean," muttered Ritzi.





Rick glared at his wife. "Problem. Picture. Who cares? We got ghosts and we gotta get rid of 'em." He turned back to Lily and Bertha. "FAST. We don't care what it takes."

Lily Typhoon put down her pen and smiled at Rick's ugly face. She had never seen so much gold jewellery on one man or a hairpiece that fitted so badly.



"Ghosts are our speciality, Mr Clawback," she said smoothly. "Now, as to our terms. We usually ask—"