

**HOW TO
SURVIVE
A HORROR
MOVIE**



Praise for
HOW TO SURVIVE A HORROR MOVIE

"Look over your shoulder – Scarlett Dunmore's creepy YA novel *How To Survive A Horror Movie* is a haunting and hilarious debut with oceans of heart and splashes of spine-tingling terror. The book is pacy and stylish with witty razor-sharp dialogue and twists. It had me at the edge of my seat from start to finish. Get ready for jump scares galore, *How To Survive A Horror Movie* is a real scream."

Eibhlis Carcione, author of *Welcome to Dead Town Raven McKay*

"*How to Survive a Horror Movie* by Scarlett Dunmore is a love letter to slasher films and the horror genre and a real page turner. Laugh out loud funny and heart-in-mouth thrilling!"

Gabriel Dylan, author of *Whiteout*

"This is a dark and thrilling horror novel, with something for all horror fans, just the right amount of humour and a main character whose obsession with the genre might just keep her alive."

Bryony Pearce, author of *Cruel Castle*

"A horrifically good ending! Horror movie geeks will LOVE this book."

Tracy Darnton, author of *The Truth About Lies*

"Fast-paced and humorous and a homage to classic films like *Scream*, this is a delightfully fun and creepy read - perfect for reading in one sitting!"

Ravena Guron, author of *This Book Kills* and *Catch Your Death*

"An enormously fun love-letter to the horror genre, with all the gore, ghosts and gay panic you could ask for, and twists that will leave you desperate for more!"

Leanne Egan, author of *Lover Birds*

"I thought it was screamingly good fun – a tongue-in-cheek romp through horror and high school stereotypes with a supernatural twist. Plenty of witty one liners, nods film buffs will love and a killer (literally) setting. I enjoyed it, and I know readers will too. (I also appreciated how female-centred it was, and especially liked the helpful/not helpful ghosts.)"

Gina Blaxill, author of *Love You to Death* and *You Can Trust Me*

"*Scream* meets *Fear Street*. Perfect for slasher fans, this book is packed with horror movie references, scares and witty dialogue.

It kept me guessing all the way to the end!"

Amy McCaw, author of *Mina* and the *Undead* series and curator of *A Taste of Darkness*

"A fast, funny, twisty and best of all fright-filled adventure.

Feisty, flawed heroine Charley is perfect – I loved it!"

Sharon Gosling, author of *Fir*

"Packed full of laughs and gore in equal measure, this exhilarating slasher takes you along for an endlessly fun ride!"

Tess James-Mackey, author of *You Wouldn't Catch Me Dead*

"Toss some Skittles in your popcorn and settle in for the horror-comedy read of the season! Twisty and delightfully gory, *How to Survive a Horror Movie* is the perfect addition to any Halloween reading list."

Kat Ellis, author of *Harrow Lake*

For my big brother
who showed me my
first horror film when
I was far too young.

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Scarlett Dunmore

LITTLE TIGER
LONDON



Rule #1

TEAM UP

They stood before me, backs against the lockers, hands on hips – perfection from head to toe.

Gabrielle was wearing the cobalt blue blazer I'd been eyeing up in Zara over the summer, wishing the price tag would magically lose two digits. It was slightly open, revealing a top that was cut way too low for the teacher not to notice. Annabelle stood beside her – the eternally loyal sidekick; never doubting, never questioning, always following. She was the kind of girl that would run you down with her mum's car just because her friends told her to. She wore whatever was leftover in the wardrobe they dipped into, no matter if that wardrobe was her own. And leaning against the wall by the water fountain, perched in the lead position as always, was the feared *Rochelle Smyth*.

Her blood ran deep in these walls and in the very foundation of the boarding school. Her mother had been a student here, her grandmother, maybe even her great-

grandmother. Rochelle's parents had been very generous over the years, lining the pockets of administrators. All for the sake of educational resources, of course, no one could – or would – accuse the Smyth family of anything other than that. Even if their daughter was suddenly now Head Girl and captain of the volleyball and field hockey team, and she and her friends were the only ones in our year who enjoyed back-to-back study hall periods after lunchtime on Fridays, which meant come 1.05 p.m. they were done with school for the weekend. The rest of us mortals had our study period sandwiched between Humanities and PE, which meant most of it was spent in the changing rooms sorting trainer laces and squeezing into too-tight sports bras in the fear that by the time we actually developed anything worth admiring in the chest region, it would already be stretched down to our kneecaps.

Rochelle looked particularly goddess-like today, compressed into an above-the-knee black-and-white floral dress, cut low enough to show off a glistening collarbone that even I was staring at. Thank God this was an all-girls boarding school, who knew what would be going on in this hallway if boys were here gawking too.

“Charley, you're gawking,” nudged Olive, who'd been my best friend since day one.

I closed my mouth and diverted my eyes back to the classroom door, as we all stood waiting for Mr Gillies to let us in for Woodwork. “I wasn't gawking,” I snorted.

“I’m just stunned the Elles are allowed to dress like that.”

“It’s the last Friday of the month, lighten up. It’s the only day we don’t have to wear a uniform. They’re just ‘*expressing* themselves’.” Olive grinned, pumping her fingers into exaggerated quotation marks.

“I can see Annabelle’s belly-button and I dread to think what I could see if Rochelle dropped a pencil and bent over.” I shuddered dramatically, shaking the skinny rose-gold bracelets on my right wrist, which were the only thing at all trendy or cool about how I dressed. Today, Olive and I wore matching cotton leggings with graphic sweatshirts emblazoned with images from our favourite horror movies. Mine had Christian Slater and Winona Ryder from the cult classic *Heathers* (such an underrated movie) while Olive confidently wore the face of *Cujo*. Only Olive could pull off a rabid St. Bernard.

“I heard there’s a party at Eden tomorrow night,” Olive buzzed.

I groaned and rolled my eyes. Eden was Harrogate’s counterpart, an all-boys boarding school about three miles along the coastline. Both schools were as secluded as was humanly possible, miles and miles from towns and even further from cities, perched on a cliff edge overlooking a deadly plummet of dark blue waves and grey limestone caves that became completely submerged when the tide came in.

We were isolated out here on Saltee Island, until the

holidays when we were shuttled on to rickety boats and ferried back to the mainland where parents would reluctantly let us crawl into their cars with bags of dirty laundry, knowing their child-free evenings and weekends were over until school resumed.

I wasn't always a student at Harrogate, and I wasn't always a boarding school resident. I went to a normal school once, where I awoke in my own bed at home and at three o'clock walked back there. I even had friends at that school, note the plural. And I had a girlfriend, but she was long gone. Now all I had left were memories and a thin gold necklace with her initial on it. Not that I was lonely now – Olive was a fantastic friend, and without her I'd have definitely packed a bag in the middle of the night and scaled a cliff to get out of here – but she was my *only* friend. At my last school I had been kind of, yes, I'll say it: *popular*. Not in a Rochelle Smyth kind of way, but definitely floating somewhere in that realm.

I twirled the necklace pendant between my fingers as I pushed back memories of the life I had before, some more painful than others. Suddenly the classroom door swung open and slammed off the lockers, sending a clanging echo reverberating down the tiled hallway. Mr Gillies stood in the doorway, his eyes fixed on Rochelle, Gabrielle and Annabelle's scanty outfits, which showed blatant disregard for school policy. Olive and I exchanged eager glances. Mr Gillies hated these girls, the loathing visible in his eyes

and in the slight tremble of his grizzled hands. He parted his lips and I waited hungrily for Rochelle's first ever public telling-off, but then his eyes drifted to the floor and he closed his mouth, opting to brush aside whatever was left of his teaching ethics. He knew who ran this school, and if Rochelle complained to her parents about a staff member, then it was well known that person's position would suddenly pop up in the job ads the next day. Rochelle Smyth ruled the school, and I ruled ... Woodwork.

I had become fairly decent at crafting objects from wood in Mr Gillies' class, so much so that I typically got a nod of approval from him and the occasional sought-after handshake. If only I could have fashioned a wooden bat to smack the Elles over the head with.

"Do you want to take a walk down to the cliffs after school?" asked Olive, who was gluing back together two pieces of wood that she'd accidentally hacked through. Her safety goggles slid down her face with the sweat.

I gave her a thumbs up and went back to my disc sander, the wood beneath the machine thundering and vibrating in my hands. It was finished with a final buffering to smooth out any splintering sharp edges, and a quick polish to make it shine. I stood back to admire my work, nodding with a grin.

Overhead, the bell roared, followed by the cheers of oppressed teen girls in dire need of a weekend of debauchery. Olive heaved her heavy book bag on to her

shoulders, slightly tilting back with the weight, then sauntered over to my worktable. “Nice work, Sullivan ... what is it?”

“A DVD stand.” I smiled, running a finger over the crescent-shaped shelves. We had one just like it at home, where Dad had kept our home movies of days spent bathing in sunshine and salt air down at the beach by our old caravan. I didn’t know where those videos were now, probably packed in a box somewhere in the attic or maybe even thrown out, discarded after I was sent away to boarding school to rectify an academic future I’d apparently thrown away the months after Dad’s death.

“Fitting, considering that’s the extent of our weekends usually.” She sighed, heading for the exit door.

“I thought you liked our horror movie nights. You’re the one who nicknamed them Slasher Saturdays,” I argued. “Or does partying with the Elles interest you more these days?” I playfully poked her in the ribs as I caught up to her.

“The partying not so much, but the *boys*...” She swooned. “A boy would be nice, for a change.”

I laughed and opened the door, the smell of ocean and seaweed hitting our faces and tickling our noses. Hopefully we’d get some sun-filled days this weekend, meaning we could lie out on blankets and read Stephen King, and forget all about the mundane humdrum of high school life where the most exciting conversational topic

was the length of Rochelle's skirt. We headed towards the ridge, where tide met rock and cliffs formed underfoot, and seagulls squawked over crashing waves. The dry grass crunched and snapped beneath the soles of my trainers that were about ten years older than the minimum model needed to fit in here with this crowd. My mum used everything she had – everything my dad left us and everything my aunt could offer – to secure me a place here at Harrogate. There wasn't much left over for limited-edition Hocas or tailored Zara blazers. If only my mother had known just how much more fashion mattered here than education, she may have thought differently about sending me.

We trudged to the sea ledge, our toes balancing on the edge of the big rock formation that jutted over the cliffs below, allowing us to drop scraps of food to the gulls and the crabs. Olive gripped a bag of torn bread in her hands, letting it bounce off her hip as she walked. She reached in and grabbed a handful, opening her palm to the sky.

Hungry gulls squawked and gathered overhead. I tipped my head back and watched them.

Gliding.

Soaring.

Waiting.

Their wings sliced through the crisp September air. If I were one of them, I'd fly as far away from here as possible, and not look back. Away from the mean girls, away from

restless nights in cold dormitory beds and lukewarm showers in communal bathrooms. Away from myself, from the girl who probably deserved to be here, isolated like this, because of who I was before.

In the distance a boat horn ripped through the gulls' feeding frenzy and they scattered, startled at first, then curious, searching for something more than bread scraps.

"Think that's a new girl?" I asked, pointing to the red-and-white vessel on the waters, fast approaching the port.

"Nah, you're the new girl." Olive shrugged. "Can't have more than one in a school year. Messes up the dynamic."

"I came *last* school year," I corrected, knotting my hair up in a bun.

"And now I can't get rid of you." She smirked, tossing the last of the bread to an empty beach down below.

"What are you getting from Shop this week?"

Shop was an antiquated system which allowed us deprived Harrogate girls one 'frivolous' purchase a week, usually something not covered by the odd care package sent from the mainland. For those with money, Shop was usually a time to buy nail varnish or a lip balm, and for those without money (example: me and Olive) Shop was a one-pound purchase of a bag of M&M's or a fizzy juice. The type of junk food neither of our mums would send us, for fear the sugar might distract us from our academic endeavours.

"Dunno," Olive muttered, gazing up at the gulls who

returned to the skies above our heads, soaring and diving.

“I might go crazy and buy a Snickers.”

I gasped. “You daredevil! All those nuts!”

“You know I need the protein for all my gym workouts.”

She snorted. “How about you?”

“I equally might do something crazy. I might get ... I can't say it...”

“Go on, tell me. I'm ready for it.”

“I might get a bag of Skittles!”

She opened her mouth wide. “Shocking! Skittles?!”

“We're just too adventurous for this school,” I said, shaking my head.

“That we are— Shit!” she wailed, covering her head.

“What?”

“I think a seagull just pooped on me!”