

# SHIVER POINT

UNDER A HOWLING MOON

THE **SHIVER POINT** SERIES

IT CAME FROM THE WOODS  
A TAP AT THE WINDOW  
UNDER A HOWLING MOON  
BENEATH THE GHOSTLY GRAVES

# SHIVER POINT

UNDER A HOWLING MOON

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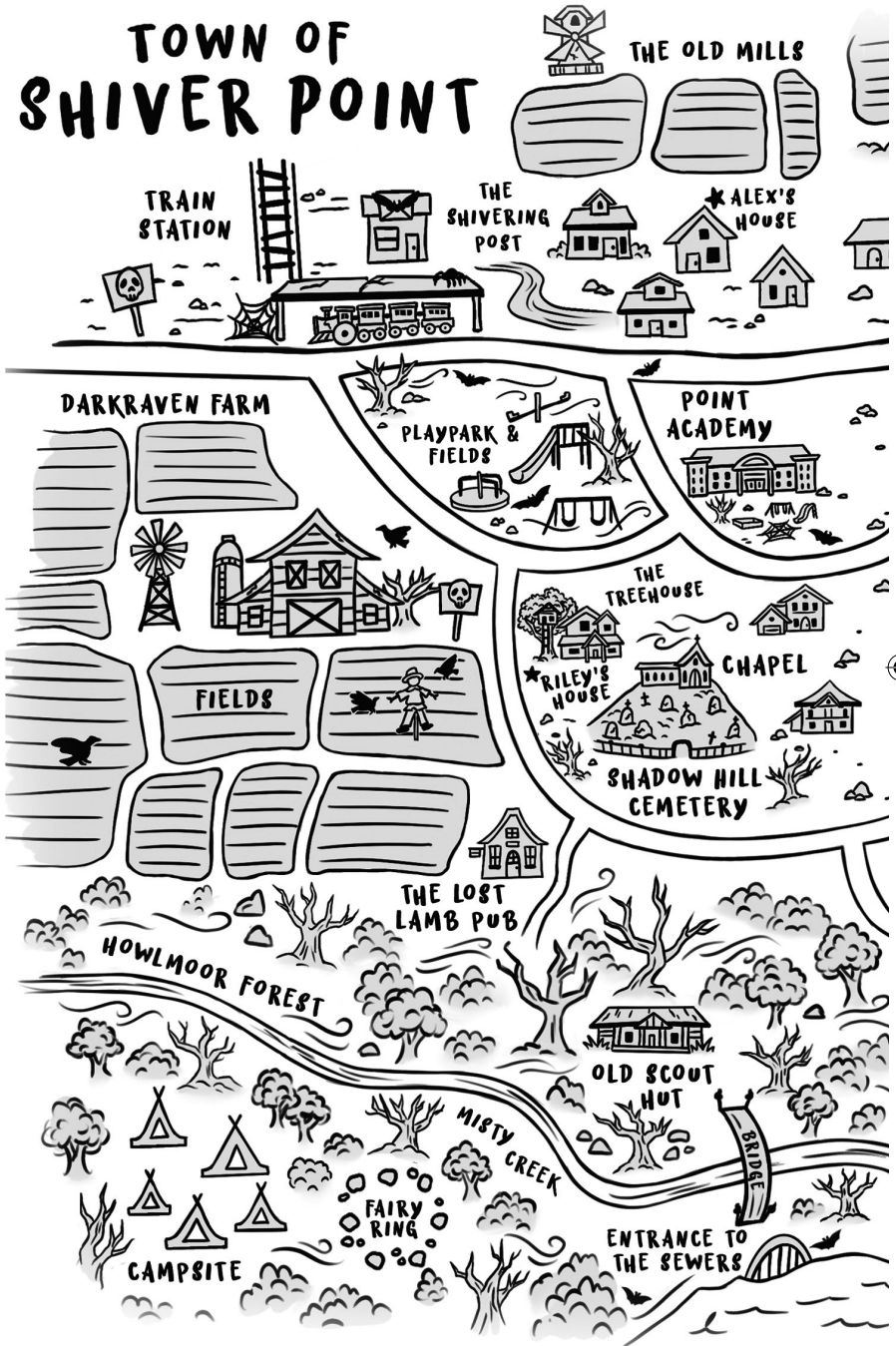


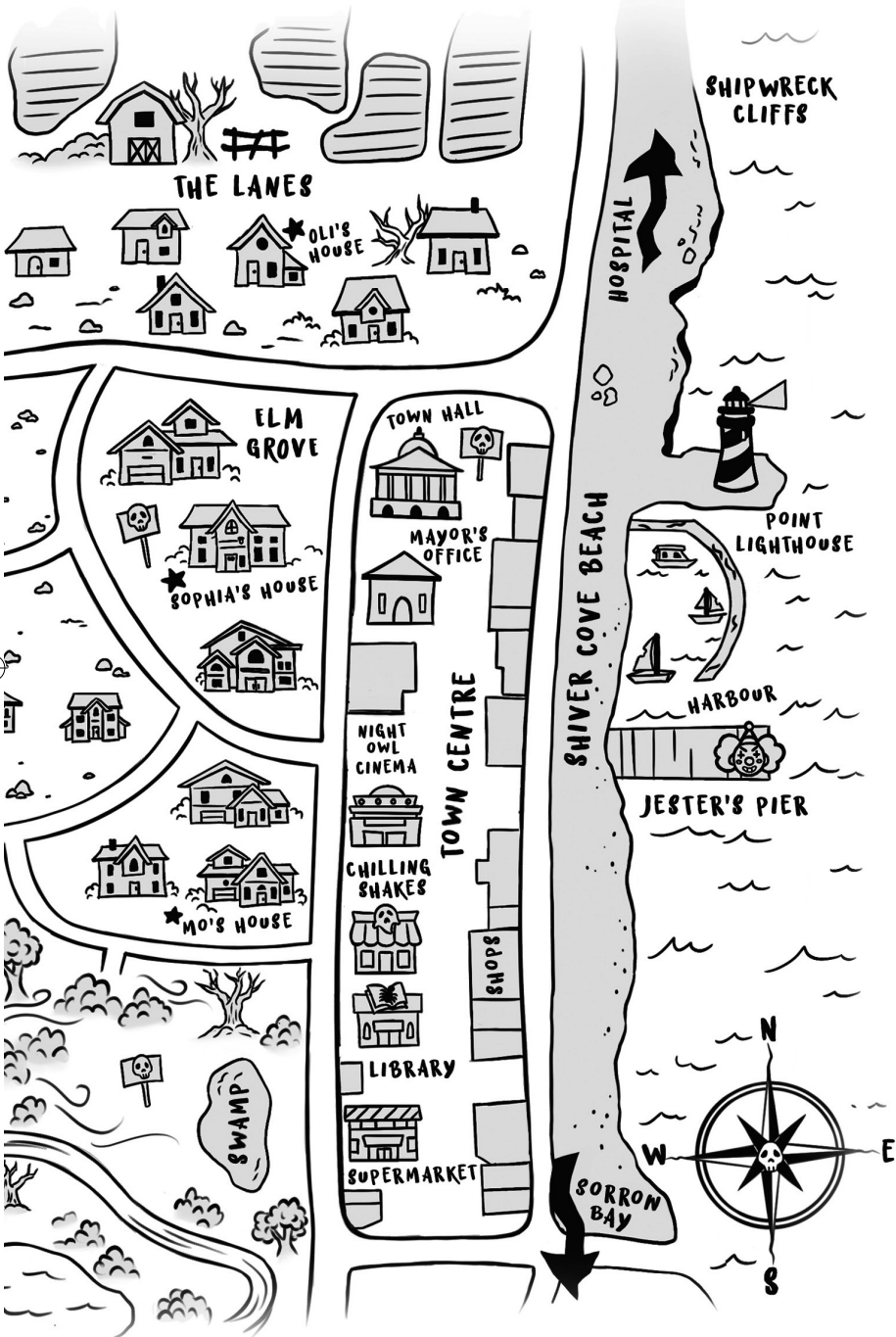


*For Rachel*  
*With warm, furry hugs*



# TOWN OF SHIVER POINT











# 1

## STORY TIME

‘Did any of you guys ever hear the story of the slaughtered Scouts?’

The group of friends were sitting in the Night Owl Cinema, watching the screen fade to black, when Oli asked his question. The other customers were already filing towards the doorway, leaving the theatre almost deserted. The rows of empty chairs were drenched in shadows.

‘The slaughtered Scouts?’ Mo repeated, half-choking as he sipped the last dregs of his milkshake. ‘That doesn’t sound like a particularly cheerful story.’



It was dark in the cinema, but Oli could still see a glimmer of uncertainty in Mo's eyes. Out of their group, Mo was the quickest to scare; at one point during tonight's film, Oli had thought Mo was going to make a run for the door, even though the story had been about a group of animals that had the power to turn into superheroes. The film wouldn't have been Oli's first choice, especially when *Zombie Planet* was showing on another screen, but he'd compromised for his friends. Now, though, he could have some fun . . . because after all, tonight was the eve of his birthday, the start of a weekend extravaganza of celebrating and camping. And where better to start than with a scary story?

'It isn't,' Oli replied ominously, ignoring the dull thud of the cinema door as the last of the audience departed.

At the edge of their group, Alex popped a huge bubble of gum, making Mo jump. 'We haven't heard of the slaughtered Scouts because there's no such thing. Oli's winding us up, trying to scare us before we go camping this weekend. That's the problem with watching too many horror films.'



That was Alex, cynical and sarcastic. He'd been the last one to join the Shiver Squad, Oli's little gang that always seemed to find themselves in the middle of all the creepy things that happened in Shiver Point, and he was always the last one to believe things. As ever, he had his skateboard by his feet and his headphones around his neck.

'I thought everyone knew about the slaughtered Scouts, but maybe not,' Oli replied, staring up at the empty screen, waiting for his friends to take the bait. The one thing Oli loved more than scary films was scary stories – well, and pranking people.

Next to Oli, Sophia had been busy collecting litter from the cinema floor and dropping it into the bag she'd brought with her, but now she paused, her eyes curious. Oli could tell that she was interested in his story: Sophia loved learning, and the look on her face reminded him of the look she wore at Point Academy during lessons.

'I know a lot about Shiver Point history, but I don't ever remember hearing anything about Scouts. Are you *sure* you're not winding us up?'





Above them, the lights started to fade, and the empty cinema became darker still.

‘Oh, I’m positive,’ Oli replied. It was all he could do to keep his face straight and his voice steady.

‘I think you need to tell us a little more,’ Riley urged, pressing one of the buttons on her digital watch to check the time. Riley was the group’s inventor, and she spent most of her time in her treehouse workshop, coming up with creations and contraptions. Oli wouldn’t have been surprised if Riley had activated an app on her phone, designed to look up his story and verify the facts on the internet.

‘Well, a few years ago a group of Scouts went on an expedition into the woods near Shiver Point,’ Oli replied, a solemn look on his face. ‘They took everything they needed with them: tents, roll mats, a stove, and, of course, lots of snacks. They said goodbye to their parents, hiked into the woods . . . and were never seen again.’

‘I’ve never heard of these Scouts,’ Mo mused, leaning forward in his chair.

‘No one has, because it isn’t true,’ Alex replied stubbornly.





‘So they just disappeared?’ Riley asked, fiddling with the straw from her milkshake. ‘There has to be more to the story than that.’

‘There is,’ Oli answered, his voice low, as if letting his friends into a secret. As he spoke, his words drifted into the empty cinema, echoing back at them off the walls. It was as if they were in a huge, empty tomb, the eyes of the dead peering out at them.

‘There were five Scouts, all experienced campers – they knew what they were doing. They chose to camp in an isolated part of the woods, somewhere people didn’t normally go, so they could have the place to themselves. They didn’t want their parents turning up and ruining their fun, so they didn’t tell anyone where they were planning to camp. And deep in the woods, with no reception, no one knew they were in trouble. Until it was too late.’

Mo pulled out his own phone, studying the number of bars on the display. ‘Is there . . . is there reception in Howlmoor Forest?’

‘I’m not sure, but I’ll try to come up with something that boosts our phone signal, just in case,’ Riley answered, giving Mo’s shoulder





an encouraging squeeze. ‘But we won’t be wild camping, anyway.’

‘I wouldn’t be so sure,’ Oli fired back. ‘You know how my dad likes to break the rules. But anyway, the first night the Scouts camped in the forest, they heard noises outside their tent. Awful shrieks and howls, as if there was something out there, stalking through the trees. The five of them barely slept, but they must have drifted off in the dead of night, because when they woke up . . . there were only four of them left.’

‘What happened to the fifth Scout?’ Alex asked, moving closer to the others so they sat in a crouched huddle, like wolves in a den.

‘There was a rip in the tent, as if claws had torn through it,’ replied Oli, feeling a stab of satisfaction that Alex was suddenly keen to hear the story too. Oli was in his element, embellishing the story as much as he could, thriving on the fear on the others’ faces. ‘Not far from the tent, there were pieces of clothing and signs of a struggle. The other Scouts knew what had happened: something had taken their friend in the night.’





‘So what did they do?’ Sophia asked, straightening the lapel on her school blazer – which she wore even though they weren’t back in school for another week.

‘They spent the next day searching, scouring the woods for clues,’ Oli answered. ‘They tried to find their friend, and traipsed through the trees for hours. But whatever had taken him had also taken their maps, and their compass, and their food.’

‘So they never found him?’ Riley urged.

‘Oh, they found what was *left* of him,’ Oli answered, really getting into the swing of the story. ‘Bones, stripped clean and scattered in a clearing in the woods, and his shattered glasses nearby. And of course, the Scouts were terrified after that. They decided to try to get home, but they couldn’t find their way out of the woods. It was as if the forest didn’t want to let them go. A mist came up, so they couldn’t see more than a few metres ahead, and they only just managed to get back to their tent before nightfall. Over the next three nights, they went missing one by one, taken by the creature that lived in the woods . . . until there was only one Scout left.’





‘The creature that lived in the woods?’ Alex repeated, rubbing his chin like a detective trying to solve a complicated case. ‘*Really?* This can’t be true.’

Oli shook his head slowly, like a schoolteacher who’d just heard the most ridiculous answer from a pupil. ‘Can’t it? Maybe this part of the world just . . . draws weird things to it.’

‘Yeah,’ Mo agreed. ‘Like a portal in *Minecraft*.’

‘Exactly,’ Oli answered, although he’d never actually played *Minecraft*. He was more a *Call of Duty* kind of guy.

When Alex spoke again, there was a hint of uncertainty to his voice, as if his usual confidence was fading. ‘So this Scout that was left . . . they survived, right?’

‘No,’ Oli replied, drawing a deep, shuddering breath. ‘When the group didn’t return home, a search party went out to look for them. When they eventually found the Scouts’ tent, there was no one there. But what the rescuers *did* find . . .’

Everyone leaned closer, hanging on Oli’s words, desperate to hear what came next. Oli could sense their fear, lingering around them





like a cloud. His expression serious, he opened his mouth to finish the story –

*BANG!*

A huge, booming slam echoed through the cinema, killing the words in Oli's throat. Mo let out a squeal of alarm, and everyone else twisted round, staring in the direction of the sound. A crooked figure stood by the doorway, aiming a dazzling light at Oli and the others.

'Come on, you lot, time to go,' called the usher. 'It might be the school holidays, but you still have to go home at some point.'

As if they were coming out of a daze, Oli and his friends struggled to their feet, plodded along the aisle and out through the Night Owl doors. Even though it was only dusk, Shiver Point's streets were already deserted. In the time it had taken Oli to tell his story, the other cinema-goers had vanished, leaving the town centre silent and ghostly.

'So what did the search party find?' Mo asked, pulling the zip of his jacket up against the cold. In the distance, Oli could hear the rumble of the sea, the hiss of the waves washing onto the shore on the other side of Shiver Point's main street.





‘Their tent was ripped to pieces,’ Oli answered. ‘There were dark splashes on the fabric, like paint. It was only when the rescuers got closer that they realised what it really was. *Blood*. There were tracks nearby too – huge clawed footprints in the ground. And just as the police arrived, they heard the same sound the Scouts had: a haunted shriek, far away in the distance.’

‘Hey, wait a minute,’ Alex protested, looking frustrated. ‘If the last Scout was gone, how could anybody know they’d been taken one by one? How could they know what the Scouts had heard?’

‘That’s the worst part,’ Oli replied, shivering as the wind gusted in from the sea. ‘One of the search party found a note, blowing around in the grass. It had been written by the last Scout, and it told the whole story. The note ended with the Scout praying for someone to come and save him – he was hiding in the tent as the thing outside came closer. And then . . . *nothing*.’

‘Wow,’ Riley murmured, no longer interested in her strawberry milkshake. ‘That *is* terrible.’

‘Does anyone know what it was that . . . slaughtered them?’ Mo asked desperately,



flinching as a beady-eyed gull swept down to pillage a chip wrapper that someone had left in the street.

‘There were rumours, of course,’ Oli replied smoothly. ‘One said that the beast was a ferocious yeti, caught in America and shipped over to one of the towns near Shiver Point. But the boat carrying it sank at sea and the yeti got free, swam to shore, and hid in the forest where the Scouts decided to camp. Another said that a terrifying witch lived in the woods, and she had dragged the Scouts to her hut and cooked them slowly in her cauldron. No one knows for sure. But after what happened to the five Scouts . . . there’s still parts of that forest that people won’t go near.’

‘You think that *thing* is . . . still out there?’ Sophia asked, her eyes searching the bank of fog that drifted up the main street, as if she expected a huge, furry beast to emerge from it.

Oli shrugged and dunked his milkshake into a nearby bin, Michael Jordan style. ‘Who knows? What happened to the Scouts was a long time ago. Whatever took them is probably long gone by now. Maybe it went to another forest,



somewhere far away. Maybe it died of old age, or starvation. Or maybe, just maybe, it's still out there, in the trees, waiting for the right time to strike again.'

Oli's story had lasted just long enough to get them to the junction of the main street, where they normally split up to go their separate ways home. A waxing moon hung high in the sky, bathing the streets in a ghostly silver glow.

Mo peered into the distance and shivered. 'I'm not sure I want to walk home on my own after that story,' he admitted. He looked from one face to the next, a glint of desperation in his eyes. 'Anyone going my way?'

Riley linked her arm through his. 'I will. We can go past your place, then I can cut through the cemetery to get to my grandad's house. What time are we setting off tomorrow?'

'Lunchtime,' Oli answered brightly, feeling a buzz of excitement in his tummy. He'd been looking forward to this camping trip for ages, and he couldn't believe it was finally here. 'Don't be late. The last one to arrive at my house has to sleep by the tent entrance.'



‘After hearing about those Scouts, there’s no way I’m stepping out of that tent once it gets dark,’ Alex answered.

‘It’ll be fine,’ Sophia asserted, doing her best to put on a brave face, although the tremble in her voice wasn’t convincing anyone.

‘We’d better head off,’ Riley announced. ‘It’s getting late, and I want to put the finishing touches to a couple of my inventions before bed. Although after that story Oli just told us, I might sleep inside tonight.’

One by one, the squad vanished into the darkness and fog, until Oli stood alone on the street corner. Once they were out of sight, he finally let the mischievous grin show on his face.

What a bunch of suckers.

Alex had been right, Oli *had* seen too many horror films, but the good thing about that was he knew exactly how to scare people, especially the other members of the Shiver Squad, who knew only too well that monsters were real.

But slaughtered Scouts, mysterious beasts, and huge clawed footprints leading into the woods?

Oli had come up with those parts all by himself.  
And he was pretty sure that at least one of his  
friends would be having nightmares tonight.  
Happy birthday eve, indeed.