

Goosebumps
**HOUSE OF
SHIVERS**

GOBLIN MONDAY

R.L. STINE

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IT ALL STARTED WITH A ROAD TRIP

Am I excited?

How would *you* feel if you were going to see snow for the first time in your life?

My name is Mario Galagos, and I grew up in Key West, Florida. My seventh-grade teacher told us it has never snowed in Key West.

I've never owned a winter coat or gloves until now. I have only two pairs of long pants.

Believe it or not, when I heard I was going to Vermont, I had to look at YouTube videos to see how to build a snowman.

I don't really know Todd and Jewel Simms that well. I moved next door to the Simms family here in Philadelphia only a month ago.

But here I am, making the drive with them to Vermont for school's winter break. I checked online. They've got *mountains* of snow in Vermont.

I'm going to *bury* myself in snow! I've been dreaming about it every night.

Todd is twelve, and Jewel is a year older. When I first met them in their backyard, I thought they were twins. They are exactly the same height, two or three inches shorter than me. They both have springy black hair and dark eyes. And serious faces. Like they're always thinking hard about things.

I don't mean they aren't fun. Jewel has a wicked sense of humor and a great laugh. And Todd is funny, too, in his own quiet way.

We started hanging out together at their house after school. Todd is into a video game called *Crack Me Up*. In the game, you leap off a high mountain cliff. The object of the game is to see how many bones you break when you land. The player who breaks the most bones is the winner.

I thought it was weird at first. But the breaking bones make a great *squish/crack* sound as they shatter, which is kind of fun. My record is four hundred broken bones in two jumps.

Jewel is a big reader. While Todd and I smash our bones, she's usually sitting behind us on the couch with a teen romance on her iPad.

We talk a lot about Florida because they've never been. Todd said it sounds like a strange sun planet in a sci-fi movie where "the sun never sets, and people are trapped in their houses because it's always too hot to go outside."

I tried to explain that's not quite right. But Todd is always making up sci-fi and horror stories. He says he gets it from his grandfather.

More about him later.

Now we are in the Simmses' big SUV, and we are on the highway heading north. Mr. Simms is driving with his wife beside him. Jewel, Todd, and I are in the second row. The third row is piled so high with our stuff, you can't see out the back window.

Of course, Jewel is giving me a hard time about the thing that I brought.

"A leaf blower? Really? Mario, do you really think you're going to find leaves to blow around?"

"It's for the snow," I explained. "I thought maybe I could make snow sculptures with it and—"

"Why do you even *have* a leaf blower?" Todd demanded.

"My dad had a hardware store in Key West," I told them. "He sold a lot of these things. I started playing

with leaf blowers when I was four. It was my favorite toy.”

They both stared at me. I knew they wanted to make jokes about that, but they were being kind.

“Most people would bring skis,” Jewel said finally.

“I’ve only been on water skis,” I said.

Mrs. Simms turned from the front seat. “Mario, this is our favorite family trip,” she said. “It’s more fun than Christmas. Really.”

“That’s because of Grandma and Grandpa,” Todd said. “You won’t *believe* them.”

“Tell Mario about your grandparents,” Mrs. Simms said.

Jewel chuckled. “I don’t know where to begin.”

“Describe Grandma Alba to him,” their dad said, his eyes straight ahead on the highway.

Jewel thought for a moment. “Uh . . . well . . . Grandma Alba is called MomMom, and she’s kind of strange and kind of awesome.”

“MomMom cooks huge pots of stew,” Todd said. “She’s always at the stove, stirring her stewpot. And she spends hours knitting strange little outfits that don’t fit anyone.”

“Tell Mario about her singing,” Mrs. Simms said.

Jewel laughed. “MomMom is always bursting into song. She makes everyone sing, too—even though she makes up all the songs. We have to sing along anyway!”

“And she gets mad if we don’t get the words right!” Todd added.

A truck rumbled by on the left, shaking the whole SUV. Mr. Simms slowed down a little.

A broad smile crossed Jewel’s face. “You haven’t heard the best. The best is Grampa Tweety.”

“He’s a best-selling author,” their mom said.

“He is? What does he write?” I asked.

“He writes these fantasy books,” Todd said. “Mom, what are the titles?”

“They are hugely popular all over the world,” Mrs. Simms said. “Two of his most famous ones are *The Big Book of Imps & Trolls* and *Fairies, Sprites, & Elves I Have Known*.”

“His name is Harlan, but everyone calls him Grampa Tweety,” Jewel said. “That’s because he is a fanatic bird-watcher. He can do hundreds of birdcalls. You name the bird, he can do it.”

“Wow,” I muttered. “Amazing.”

“And he keeps a huge, floor-to-ceiling birdcage in his living room,” Todd added. “It’s jam-packed with chirping birds. They chirp day and night.”

“Whoa!” I exclaimed. “A giant floor-to-ceiling birdcage in the living room! I can’t even picture it! That’s awesome!”

Of course, when I said that, I had no idea I would soon end up trapped inside that birdcage—fighting for my life.