

Here Comes Mr. Trouble

by, Brett Battles

Chapter 1

It started with a *gurgly suck*.

Eric Morrison twisted around, trying to see what had caused the noise.

“Are you going to just sit there all afternoon?”

He would have sworn the sound had come from the other side of the classroom, but he didn't see anything over there that could have caused it.

Please tell me I'm not hearing things, too.

As he started to turn back around, someone punched him in his arm. “Hey, are you ignoring me?”

He glanced over his shoulder. Maggie Ortega was standing right next to his desk. He'd been concentrating so hard on the gurgly suck he hadn't heard her walk up.

“Why'd you do that?” he asked, rubbing the spot where she'd hit him.

She stared at him over the top of her glasses as if he'd lost his mind. “The bell? It went off like two minutes ago. You're usually the first one out the door.”

Eric glanced at the clock hanging at the back of the classroom. Two fifty-two p.m. School was out. How had he missed that?

“Thanks,” he said. He gathered his books and started shoving them in his backpack. “I guess I wasn't paying attention.”

She looked down at him for a few seconds, then said, “What’s wrong with you?”

What’s not? “What do you mean?”

“You’ve been acting all weird for days now. Stop it. I don’t like it.”

“No, I haven’t,” he said.

She rolled her eyes. “Yes, you have,” she said, heading for the door.

She was right and Eric knew it. He *had* been acting weird, but given what was going on, how else was he supposed to act?

“Everything all right back there?” Mrs. Bernhardt asked from her desk at the front of the room. She was their sixth-period English teacher.

“Yeah. Fine,” he said as he stood up.

“Eric, I expect you to have your essay in on time next Monday. It’s not like you to fall behind.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Like he needed *that* reminder. Still, just like Maggie a few seconds earlier, Mrs. Bernhardt was also right. It wasn’t like him.

He was a good student who always got his work in on time in the past. But for the last two weeks, even though he was sure he’d put his finished assignments in his backpack, when it came time to turn them in, they weren’t there. Math, history, English—it didn’t matter.

It almost felt like he was going crazy.

Actually, maybe not almost, he thought. *If I am going crazy, that would explain everything.*

“Hurry up!” Maggie called from the doorway.

“Have a nice afternoon,” Mrs. Bernhardt said.

“You, too,” Eric replied quickly, then headed for the door.

The main corridor of Valley View Middle School was nearly deserted as they headed toward the front exit.

“Come on, come on,” Maggie said.

“If you’re in a hurry, don’t let me hold you back,” Eric said. “I’ll just see you tomorrow.”

She whirled around, stopping right in front of him. “Tomorrow? What do you mean *tomorrow*?”

“I’m just saying, if you need to be somewhere, I don’t want to be the one who makes you late. I know you hate that.”

She did hate it, but that wasn’t the real reason Eric was urging her to go on without him. Unlike the rush she seemed to be in, he definitely was *not* in a hurry. Chances were there’d be another one of the Neanderthals waiting to mess with him on his walk home. It had been happening almost every day lately, since about the same time he’d started forgetting his homework.

Plus there was another reason he wasn’t anxious to get going. Eric really didn’t want to be at his house at all, not if it meant opening his front door again and finding out his mother was still gone. It would be the fourth day in a row.

His dad had told him she’d gone on a business trip, like it was a normal event, and had been completely unconcerned about the fact she hadn’t said goodbye to either of them before she left. But it wasn’t normal. Not even close. And skipping goodbyes? No way.

Eric's mom worked at a small beauty salon in town. She didn't go on vacations, let alone business trips. "Time away means time we're losing money. And we can't afford that." How many times had he heard her say that?

"Have you forgotten what we're supposed to do today?" Maggie asked.

Guuuuuuuuuuurrrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

Eric turned his head, trying once more to pinpoint where the odd noise was coming from. "Did you hear that?" he asked. It sounded both distant and right around the corner.

"Hear what?"

"That sound."

"What sound? I didn't hear anything." She crossed her arms and narrowed her eyes. "You're just trying to distract me, aren't you? Well, that's not going to happen. We agreed to go to the library this afternoon to work on our China report, remember? Now, come on."

The China report. Right.

She took off down the hallway at a pace that was more a run than a walk. After a deep breath, Eric started after her.

• • •

The Tobin City Library was a single-story building about three times larger than Eric's house. It was only six blocks from the school so the walk didn't take them long. But because they had gotten a late start—Eric's fault, as Maggie pointed out several times on the way over—the only open table when they got there was the one nearest the librarian counter.

“Great,” Maggie said as she dropped her bag on top.

Mrs. Kim, the head librarian, looked over, one eyebrow arched high into her forehead. “Shhhh!”

Mrs. Kim was the reason no one wanted that particular table. She could hear everything you said. The second you started goofing around she would “Shhhh” you and remind you that if you weren’t there to study, you were welcome to leave.

“Sorry, Mrs. Kim,” Maggie said, glaring at Eric.

As soon as they sat down, Maggie pulled a thick folder of loose papers out of her bag and slid it across the table to him.

“You’re responsible for the part about the Great Wall,” she said.

Eric picked up the folder. “What is this?”

“Research I printed out from the Internet last night.”

He looked at a couple of the pages. “You printed all this out last night?”

She sat back. “Well, given the way you’ve been acting lately, I knew you weren’t going to do it.”

He ignored that and asked, “Why am I responsible for the Great Wall? Aren’t we supposed to decide who does what together?”

She stared at him, her face blank.

After a moment, he said, “Fine. I’ll take the Great Wall.” He thought about asking what *she* was going to work on but was afraid she might snap at him again, so he said nothing and glanced through the pages instead.

“You’re going to have to *read* them,” Maggie said.

“I know. I’m just trying to get an idea of what’s here.”

She scowled, pulled out another equally thick folder and started going through it.

After twenty minutes, Eric leaned back and rubbed his eyes. He'd only made it about a third of the way through the folder but he was seriously thinking about skipping the rest. He was sure he already had more than enough information. The only problem was Maggie. Since she'd taken the time to print everything out, she probably expected him to read it all.

He gave his eyes one more rub, then opened them. As annoying as it was, he was probably going to have to—

He suddenly became aware that there was someone sitting in the chair next to him. He turned his head just enough so he could see who it was and immediately wished he hadn't.

Filling the chair beside him was the six-foot-two, two-hundred-and-who-knew-how-many-pound solid body of terror known as Peter Garr. That was his legal name, anyway. To most of the kids at school he was known as King of the Jerks.

In the two weeks since Eric had become the victim of choice for after-school intimidation, the one guy who hadn't bothered with him yet was Peter Garr. Apparently, that was about to change.

With his oily blond hair hanging partially over his face, Peter sneered long and hard at Eric, then opened a car magazine that was sitting on the table and started looking through it.

I didn't even hear him sit down.

With a shudder, he returned to Maggie's printouts. But the words refused to cooperate and he soon found himself reading the same sentence over and over and over.

Focus!

Just as Eric was starting to relax enough to understand what was on the page, Peter set a meaty hand on the table. He flexed his fingers then curled them into a fist as he turned his head just enough so that he could look Eric in the eye.

Eric wanted to turn away but Peter's stare held him in place.

The corner of Peter's mouth inched upward and he began a laugh so low that Eric almost didn't hear it. It was nearly half a minute before he turned back to his magazine.

"What are you doing?" Maggie asked. "You can't be done yet."

Had she not seen what just happened?

"Nothing. I was just...never mind." He returned his attention to the folder, but just as he started to read a new page he heard the noise again.

Guuuuu—

His head snapped around, scanning the area behind him. It was close. So very close.

—uuuuuuuuuuuu—

But there was nothing there.

—uuuuuuurrr—

He looked back at Maggie. "Tell me you hear it now," he said, his voice raised so he could be heard over the sound.

—rrrgly suuuuuu—

"Quiet," Maggie whispered, her eyes wide.

"You hear it, right?"

—uuuuuuuuuck.

“Why are you talking so loud?”

“Shhh,” Mrs. Kim said from behind the counter.

“Yeah. Shut up,” Peter said beside him in an oddly monotone voice.

Eric turned and looked back again. It *had* to be there somewhere. But all he could see were bookcases.

Must be in one of the aisles.

He pushed himself out of his chair.

“Where are you going?” Maggie asked.

Peter looked at him as if he was interested in the answer, too.

“The sound,” Eric said.

“What sound?” she asked.

Guuuuuuuuuuurrrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

“*That* sound.”

Peter, who had been obviously listening to their conversation, narrowed his eyes as if he didn’t quite understand what Eric was talking about but thought he should.

Maggie shrugged. “The only thing making any noise is you.”

“Shhhhhh,” Mrs. Kim commanded.

Eric shook his head. “Never mind.”

If he was right, the sound was coming from just the other side of the nearest bookcase.

Guuuuuuuuuuurrrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

He walked around it and stopped at the end of the aisle.

Guuuuuuuuuuurrrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

No question about it. The gurgly suck was coming from somewhere down there and it seemed to be speeding up. But he couldn't see anything that could be causing it.

Cautiously, he entered the aisle.

Guuuuuuuuuuurrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

When he'd gone halfway down the row, the sound grew so loud he had to put his hands over his ears just to think straight. He looked back the way he'd come, expecting to see a crowd of people gathered there wondering what was making all the racket, but there was no one.

Was he *really* the only person who could hear it?

He peered through the bookcase back at the table where he'd been sitting. Maggie was writing something in her notebook and Peter appeared engrossed in his magazine. Behind them, Mrs. Kim sat quietly at her desk using the scanner to check in books. If anyone should have heard the noise, it would have been her. Her hearing was scary good.

But she showed no reaction at all. None of them did.

It's just like everything else that's been going on. I'm the only one it's happening to.

The thought that he was going crazy crossed his mind again.

Guuuuuuuuuuurrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck. Guuuuuuuuuurrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck. Guuuuuuuuuurrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

Eric whipped around in surprise, the noise right behind him. But as he turned, his foot caught on the carpet and sent him banging into the bookcase.

"Shhhh!" Mrs. Kim said. "If you can't be quiet, then you'll have to leave."

Guuuuuuuuuuurrrrrgly suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

It was so close Eric felt he could almost reach out and touch it.

Gurgly. Gurgly. Gurgly. Suck. Suck. Suck. Suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

Then, though he knew it was impossible, the air *moved*.

Not like a breeze you could feel. He could actually *see* it. It was like an inflating balloon expanding toward him.

As the last of the sucking sound faded, the air jiggled then collapsed back to normal.

Eric reached out and put his hand through the area where it had been. There was nothing there.

Had he been seeing things? Had he—

Gurgly. Gurgly. Gurgly. Suck. Suck. Suck. Suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

The air bubble shot out again, coming straight at him. He fell backwards onto the floor but it stopped just inches from where he'd been standing and hovered there. As he scrambled back to his feet, he could see it wasn't round like he'd initially thought. It was more like a box—a foot long, maybe a little less than that wide, and about two inches thick—but definitely a box.

Once more it snapped back and disappeared.

Eric reached out again, this time halting just short of where the box had been.

Gurgly. Gurgly. Gurgly. Suck. Suck. Suck. Suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck.

The air rushed out so quickly it knocked into his fingers before he could pull them away. What he saw had to have been an illusion. There was something solid inside, something definitely not, well, air-like.

Gurgly. Gurgly. Gurgly. Gurgly. Gurgly. Gurgly.

Chapter 2

“Everyone, please remain calm,” Mrs. Kim called out. “It was just a small earthquake. Please return to what you were doing and keep your voices down. This is still a library.”

A small earthquake? It had felt pretty big to Eric.

He looked around, expecting to see books covering the floor, but the only book on the ground was the one that had popped out of the air.

The rip it had come through was gone now and everything looked normal again, like nothing had ever happened. Cautiously, he waved his hand through the area where the bubble had been.

Nothing. Just your average, everyday air.

He knelt down next to the book. It was one of those old-fashioned phone books nobody he knew used any more. Thick, with yellow-colored pages.

When it hit the floor, it had fallen open to the “T” section—Trailers in the upper left, and Trucking in the lower right. In the middle of the right-hand page was an ad surrounded by a thick red border. Though he knew it was impossible, the ad seemed to be glowing.

ARE YOU FORGETTING THINGS?
LOSING THINGS?

ARE PEOPLE YOU KNOW ACTING STRANGE?
IS SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU MISSING???
DO YOU FEEL LIKE THINGS ARE BEYOND YOUR
CONTROL?

ARE YOU IN...*TROUBLE*?

Help Is Standing By
Call **678768253**

This is a Free Call. In fact, you won't pay a cent for
anything. **EVER.**

TFS
TROUBLE FAMILY SERVICES
THE TROUBLESHOOTING EXPERTS

Eric stared at the page. It was like the ad had been written especially for him. Yes, he'd been forgetting things. Yes, some of his stuff had gone missing. Yes, there were plenty of people around him acting strange. Yes, even if his father said his mom was on a business trip, it felt to Eric like she was missing. And, yes, yes, yes, he felt like his life had suddenly spun out of his control.

How could it *know*?

Maybe this was the final proof that his mind was slipping. He'd obviously been hearing things no one else heard. Couldn't he just as easily be seeing things?

Slowly, he extended his index finger and lowered it toward the book. He'd all but convinced himself it wasn't really there and that his finger wouldn't stop until it hit the carpet.

But he touched paper, not carpet. Thin, phone-book-type paper.

It's real, he thought.

Curious now, he flipped back several pages and stopped. He was still in the Ts. In fact, he was still on the same Trailers-to-Trucking pages he'd been on, complete with the

same glowing ad. He looked through some more. Same. Same. Same. The whole thick directory just a repeat of the Trailers-to-Trucking page. And the ad.

As his hand rested on the open book, he felt the page beneath his palm start to rip. He was alarmed for a moment until he realized the page was meant to be removed.

Carefully, he tore the rest of it out.

Suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck. Gurgly.

The book started vibrating, then the carpet sucked it into the floor like it was being flushed down a high-powered toilet. And like that, it was gone.

Eric was left kneeling in the otherwise empty aisle, staring at an empty spot on the carpet, the torn page in his hand.

“There you are.”

He looked over his shoulder. Maggie was standing at the far end of the aisle, but she wasn't alone. Peter Garr was lurking right behind her.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

Had she seen the book disappear?

He was about to ask her when she said, “Did the earthquake knock you down?”

“Uh...no. I was looking at...at the bottom shelf. So you felt it?”

She shrugged. “Kind of. At first I thought it was just a big car driving by.”

“Just a car?” he said. It most *definitely* didn't feel like a car to him.

“Why are you even back here?” she asked.

“Just...uh...checking some books,” he said.

Her gaze dropped down to the paper in his hand. “What's that?”

“What? This?” He held up the paper. She'd seen it. She'd actually seen it. It

wasn't something that only he could see. "I..." He paused. What was he going to say? That he ripped it out of a book that then disappeared? "It's, um, trash. Someone left it back here. Thought I'd throw it away."

"Well, whatever you're trying to find, hurry up. We still have a lot of work to do." She turned and walked away.

Peter, on the other hand, took a few steps toward Eric, tilted his head, and began sniffing the air.

Eric stood up, keeping his eyes on the bigger boy.

Sniff. Sniff.

Peter continued down the aisle, his head swiveling back and forth, his nostrils flaring with each breath.

Sniff. Sniff.

As he neared, Eric moved back until he bumped into the bookcase and could retreat no more.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

Sniff. Sniff.

Peter stopped a few feet away and sampled the air again. *Sniff.* He leaned forward, his nose hovering next to Eric's shoulder. *Sniff.* Then the other shoulder. *Sniff.* Then down his arm. *Sniff. Sniff.* And then, when he reached the hand that was still holding the page out of the phone book, his nose went into overdrive. *Sniff. Sniff. Sniff. Sniff. Sniff.*

"Hey, uh, that's kind of weird," Eric said.

The bully looked up at Eric, his eyes wide. *Sniff. Sniff. Sniff.* He reached out to grab the page from Eric's hand, but Eric yanked it back just in time. He then twisted out

from between Peter and the bookcase.

Eric took a big step backward. "I've got to...get back to my friend," he said, then turned and ran the rest of the way down the aisle.

When he reached the end, he looked back. Peter had dropped to his hands and knees and was sniffing the area where the book had been before it vanished.

Not sure if he was more creeped out or confused, Eric made his way back to the study table. His plan was to grab his books and get out of there. He thought if he left now, he could probably get most of the way home before Peter even realized he was gone.

"Oh, no," Maggie said as he started shoving his notebook in his backpack. "Where do you think you're going?"

"I gotta get home."

She pushed her glasses all the way up her nose. "Eric Morrison, you're going to sit down and help me work on this report. You *promised* me."

"I'm sorry, Maggie. Maybe...maybe we can get together tonight and finish it after dinner."

"We're already going to do that, remember? We need to work on it now *and* tonight."

Eric sensed something move behind him. As he looked over his shoulder, he realized he'd lost his chance. Peter was back.

"Eric?" Maggie said.

He took a breath then put his backpack down. "Fine."

"I thought you were going to throw that away," she said.

"What?"

She pointed at the piece of paper—the page from the phonebook—he'd set on the table when he started packing up.

“Oh, right,” he said.

He picked it up, intending to take it to the trash, but glanced at the ad again. *Should I?* Really, it was kind of ridiculous. A company that helped people in trouble? He'd never heard of anything like that before. It was probably just a joke.

But...what if it wasn't? It wouldn't hurt to call, would it?

There was a pay phone in the back of the library near the restrooms. He reached into his pocket to see how much change he had, then realized he'd spent the last of his money on his lunch. He leaned toward Maggie and whispered so Peter couldn't hear, “Do you have some change?”

“What do you need change for?” she asked, suspicious.

“I need to make a call.”

Her face scrunched up. “Why do you need money to make a call?”

“Pay phones aren't free.”

“Ugh! When are your parents going to buy you a cell phone?”

Despite the fact all his friends had one, Eric's parents thought he was still too young. “Do you have change or not?”

She frowned at him, then reached into her backpack and pulled out some coins.

As she handed them over, he said, “I'll pay you back.”

“It's okay. Don't worry about it.”

“No, I will.”

“Just go make your call,” she said. Then, as if she'd forgotten she should be mad

at him, she added, “And hurry up. We’ve still got a lot to do.”

There was no one near the phone when he got there, so he pulled out the ad, stuck a couple coins in the slot, and started dialing. It wasn’t until he’d finished punching in the last of the digits that he realized it was too short for calling long distance and too long for local. The number on the ad was obviously a misprint.

Disappointed, he was starting to hang up when two odd things happened: 1) his coins fell into the change cup, and 2) the number he’d dialed began to ring.

Before he could decide what to do, someone answered.

“Hi. This is Trouble Family Services. The troubleshooting experts! You gotta problem, we gotta help.”

Eric suddenly found himself unable to speak.

“Hello?” the girl who’d answered said.

He tried to push a word—any word—out of his mouth, but his throat was clinched tight.

“Hello?”

He had the sudden desire to just hang up and forget he’d even found the ad.

“Hello, is anyone there?”

He drew in a deep breath.

“Ah, someone is there. Good,” the girl said. “Don’t worry. You’re not our first nervous client. But you can talk to me. I’m a friend.”

“Who...who is this?” Eric croaked.

“Excellent! You do know how to talk. I was getting worried that we might have gotten a really young one this time.” She paused. “Of course, I guess a young one

wouldn't have known how to dial...but you never know." Again, she fell silent, this time like she was waiting for him to say something. "Oh, right. Who am I? Sorry. My name is Fiona and I am your point of contact representative."

"I'm sorry," he said. "You're my what?"

"Your point of contact representative."

"And what exactly is that?"

She said nothing for a moment, then, "Hold on, please."

The line clicked, then music even his parents wouldn't have listened to started to play. This went on for several seconds before it finally cut out mid-tune. Eric could hear papers moving around and then Fiona said, "I apologize for the delay." More movement. "Ah, here it is." Then, as if she were reading, "Your point of contact representative is here to help you." A pause. "How's that?" Before he could respond, she started speaking again. "Now, I have several questions I need to ask you."

"Wait," he said, looking at the ad in his hand. "Tell me how you did this."

"I, uh, haven't done anything yet."

"The book! How did you make it pop out of the air?"

"Book...pop out of the air," she repeated, obviously not following him.

"It made this really weird sound, but I was the only one who could hear it."

After several seconds, Fiona let out a long, "Ooooooh." Then, like a machine gun in an old war movie, said, "Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh."

"Are you all right?"

"Of course, I'm all right. I'm just looking for the right question...ah...here it is. Number thirty-seven. Method of contact. I hate skipping ahead like this so if you don't

mind, we'll get to that in a few minutes, okay?"

"No. Not o—"

"Question one. First name?"

"Uh...Eric."

"Eric. I like that. Mine's Fiona, or did I already tell you that? It's Irish. My mom's idea. She's actually *from* Ireland." Eric could hear a voice in the background. "I'm just *bonding*, Keira," Fiona said, her voice muffled by something held over the receiver. Her next words came back clear and strong. "Question two. How many bikes do you own?"

"Excuse me? Don't you want to know my last name?"

"That is question seven. Right now, I want to know how many bikes you own."

"Me personally or my family?"

"You personally."

"One. Why would I need more than that?" he asked.

"Question three. Age?"

"Thirteen. Fourteen in a month and a half."

"No rushing ahead. Four. Birthday?"

"November 21st."

"Five," she said. "If you had the choice of pepperoni pizza or Hawaiian pizza, which would it be?"

"Hawaiian?"

"Is that definite or are you just guessing?"

"Is this really important?"

"I assure you our questionnaire has been put together and refined over many,

many years. Everything I ask you is potentially important. So Hawaiian then?”

“Sure.”

“Great. Six. Shoe size?”

The questions went on and on. Besides telling her his last name, where he lived, where he went to school, the color of his eyes, and how he had gotten their phone number, Eric also answered questions on such things as favorite TV show, what grade he got on his last math test, and how many cavities he had. It was all very confusing.

When she finally finished, she said, “And how can we help you today?”

“Help me? I...I don't know.”

“You *are* in trouble, right? I mean, that's why you called. So what seems to be the problem?”

Everything! he thought.

“It's like my whole life is suddenly the opposite of what it usually is.”

“Suddenly...the...opposite,” she said.

He could picture her writing the words down on her questionnaire. Perhaps there was a space for that, too.

“I'm forgetting homework,” he said. “I'm getting into fights with people who never bothered me before. I'm losing things like my house key. That got me grounded for two days.”

“Please. No details unless I ask for them. So how long has this been going on?”

“A couple of weeks.”

He could hear her write something down. “Okay. So, here's what will—”

“There's more,” he said.

“What more?”

“My mother.”

“What about your mother?”

Eric hesitated for a moment, then said, “My dad says she went on a trip. But I don’t believe him.”

“Then where is she?”

“I don’t know.”

“She’s missing.” It was a statement of fact, not a question.

“She could be, I guess. I just don’t know.”

More writing.

“Am I going crazy?” he asked.

“Well, as a professional, I can guarantee you that you’re not going crazy.”

“Then how do I make everything normal again?”

“The first thing I want you to do is calm down and stop worrying. By this time tomorrow, we’ll be there to help.”

“Wait, you’re coming here?” He wasn’t sure how he felt about that. He didn’t know who these people were.

“How are we supposed to help you if we’re not there?”

“I don’t have any money. I can’t afford to pay you.”

“Who said anything about money?” Fiona asked. “Did I mention it? I’m sure I didn’t. That ad you got, somewhere on there it must say our services are free.”

He glanced at the ad. It was right near the bottom

In fact, you won’t pay a cent for anything.

EVER.

“Oh,” he said. “Right. I forgot.”

“All right, then. Just hang tight and we’ll get this straightened out in no time.”

“You...really can fix things?”

“I promise,” the girl said.

CONTACT REPORT

Case #3114

Client: Eric Morrison, Case #3114

Point of Contact Representative: Fiona

Report Written by: Keira (with considerable help from Fiona). [*Note from Keira: Despite what my sister thinks, she provided very little help with this.*] [*Note from Fiona: SO not true.*]

- A. Per standard procedure, the client—Eric—was questioned using the New Client Profile worksheet.

- B. Personal information:
 - Age—13 (turns 14 on November 21st)
 - Hair—Brown, client describes style as a bit wavy, not long
 - Height—Last measurement one month earlier, client says he thinks he was 5 feet 4 inches at the time
 - Weight—110 pounds
 - Eyes—blue/gray (says they change depending on what he is wearing; need independent confirmation), no glasses
 - Home: Tobin, Colorado; lives with parents; only child

- C. Client was also questioned about the initial contact moment. Detailed description has been added to the file. [*Fiona: Written by me, of*

course. And very well, I might add.] [*Keira: Whatever.*]

- D. Initial contact is categorized as a PC 17C.

From TFS Point of Contact Catalog:

PC 17C—A PC 17C is the sudden appearance of a phone book. As of the last catalog update, a PC 17C has been the instrument of contact 21 times, most recently in cases 3098, 3105, and 3111.

[*Fiona: We ALL remember 3111!*] For full list of cases using this method, please refer to index at end of catalog.

The appearance of the phone book has occurred by various methods. Clients have describe some of the following:

falling from the ceiling

squeezing out of a faucet (bathtub and sink)

appearing with a flash in a microwave.

- E. As in the previous cases, as soon as client removed the phone number from the book, the book disappeared. In this case, removal was achieved by tearing out the page. [*Note from Ronan: If he still has it, we need to make sure we get that page before we leave.*]
- F. Phase 2 of contact—calling us—occurred approximately five minutes later via pay phone at the Tobin City Library on Wednesday, September 28.
- G. Detailed description of the call is attached to this report. [*Fiona: Again, written by me.*] [*Keira: Like anyone cares.*]
- H. END OF REPORT

copies to: file, Ronan, Mom

Excerpt from the TPS Encyclopedia

POINT of CONTACT

Term describing how clients receive information allowing them to contact TFS for help.

There has been much speculation, and more than a few wild guesses, concerning the Point of Contact. Here are the facts:

- a) The Point of Contact event started with the very first TFS client (long before it was actually called TFS), and has continued on every case for two hundred and fifty years.
- b) Some of the events are more spectacular than others, ranging from near hurricanes to the information quietly appearing at the client's bedside. Extensive research has been done to try and correlate the intensity of the contact with the results of the case that followed, but no trends have been detected.
- c) TFS has never controlled the Point of Contact event. In that, we are as in the dark as to when a new client will contact us as they are to our existence prior to the event.
- d) The source of the Point of Contact event remains unknown, but it is not a stretch to say that it must be connected with whatever it was that picked our family for this job.