

Boomo and Co. Supernatural Investigators

Chapter I

It was a pleasant fall afternoon, the wind slowly rustling the trees, the leaves blanketing the ground in a colorful embrace, blah blah whatever. However nice a day it was, it could have been raining nonstop and exploding with thunder for all I cared. You see, today was my older brothers big day. The day he was going to get his new accordion.

Now, I've got nothing against the accordion personally (well, not that much), it's more that I've got a problem with the way my brother plays the accordion. LOUD. And not very well.

He first became obsessed with the accordion when he saw a guy playing one at a music festival (not very well, I thought). He said he knew right there and then that this was the instrument for him. He begged our parents, he pleaded to them until finally they picked up an old one at a yard sale, to “give him the feel of it” they said.

Well, he loved it. He began to play some of the songs in his accordion lesson book that he got with it. The only problem with that was that he started somewhere near the end and played the song all wrong. I seriously wanted to kill that accordion, as the sound went right through the wall of his room and down the hall into mine. I don't think anyone slept until my parents sat him down and explained that he was only to play in the day.

So he played in the day. He played ALL day. It was probably the most annoying time of my life. Eventually, after a month and a bit, he started playing less often. I thought it might be finally over.

I wish. He was just saving up for another accordion from Diddle's Discount Instruments. A brand-new shiny red one. And he had the money to pay for it. So my parents agreed. That was why I was now in the car on the way to Diddle's Discount Instruments.

“I'm going to get my accordion! I'm going to get my accordion!” my brother was practically bouncing up and down. I ground my teeth and stared at the road. Only ten more minutes and we'll be there, I reminded myself.

“I'm going to get my accordion!” he had repeating this, like some strange mantra, ever since we'd left home. To say it was starting to get on my nerves was an understatement.

“I'm going to get my accordion!” I checked my watch. Two-twenty five flashed the screen. Five more minutes. I wished I had brought my Ipod.

“I'm going to get my acc-”

“Be quiet, please, Jeffery.” said Mom at the same time as I roared: “Shut up!!!”

“I'm going to get my.... oh.” said Jeffery. He slumped a little.

“Thank you. And I'll thank you,” said Mom, turning to face me, “not to say things like that to your brother.”

“Okay, I'm sorry, Jeffery.” I mumbled in response.

“Much better.” said Mom. She turned to say something to Dad, but it was drowned out by Jeffery's shout.

“We're here! We're here we're here we're here here here here-” he shouted but stopped when I clamped my hand over his mouth. He gave me a noogie.

“Boys! Stop that!” said Mom.

“We're here.” sighed Dad.

After we had all piled out of the car, I got my first look at Diddle's Discount Instruments. It looked pretty run down. The roof was missing a few shingles, the door and windows were wonky, and there was sign that might have, a long time ago, said “Diddle's Discount Instruments”, but now was too faded to read.

“Is it open?” asked Mom hesitantly. In response Dad pointed at the window. Barely legible through the dusty glass was a small card that read “Open”.

Jeffery ran up the shop door and pushed it open with a creak. Sometimes shops doors have bells that ring when you open the door, but that was the first I'd ever heard an organ playing.

We all filed in. The inside of the shop was just as dusty, decrepit and wonky-looking as the outside. It was cavernous. Huge clusters of instruments stood on stands or tables, or just lay on the floor. All looked dusty and unused.

There was a small trumpet on a stand near the door. Below the the trumpet were the words “Please Blow For Assistance”. Jeffery grabbed it and was about to blow it when Mom grabbed it. She pulled out a tissue and wiped off the layer of dust around the mouthpiece. Then she gave it back to Jeffery.

Jeffery raised it to his mouth and blew. It sounded like the last, dying bellow of a strangled elephant. Mom covered her ears and wrinkled her nose. Dad was already wearing earmuffs.

The awful sound eventually died away. There was a moment of silence, and then the creak of a door opening. Footsteps echoed along the aisles for quite a while. Eventually a little man popped out of the mouth of one of the aisles.

“Hello hello hello hello!” he said with a smile that would have had him arrested had it been any more phony. “I am D. Diddle, the owner of Diddle's Discount Instruments. What can I do for you?”

“Um, yes.” said Mom, a little taken aback by his huge smile that managed to show all his large, shiny teeth. “We're here for an accordion.”

“Ah, the accordion!” said D. Diddle. “How I have whiled away many blissful hours playing and listening to that enchanting instrument. Did you order the Red Plastic with White Pine Piano Accordion Deluxe Edition?”

“Uh...” said Mom. Dad just stood there, not hearing any of this through his thick, woolly earmuffs.

“Yes, I did!” said Jeffery, nearly jumping and down with excitement.

“Ah, it's for you, is it, my boy?” said Diddle, turning to face Jeffery.

“Yup!” said Jeffery, unaware that that had been a rhetorical question. Diddle beamed at him. “Well, I think it's a wonderful choice of instrument, and I am glad to hear there are

other lovers of the piano accordion in the neighborhood!!!”

Uh-huh. I definitely did not like this guy.

“Well, follow me!” said Diddle, striding off down an aisle. We scurried after him. He could go spectacularly fast for such a short guy. Dad stood where he was for a minute, then took his earmuffs off and followed.

I took the opportunity to examine Diddle as he zoomed along the aisles like a short, slightly fat rocket. He was wearing a purple top hat on his almost completely bald head. His frock coat was a mishmash of different colors, and rather hurt the eyes. His shirt under that was neon pink, and his pants were a bright red. His shoes were black and highly polished.

He moved with a sort of wobbling gallop that allowed him to move quite fast. He held himself steady with a walking stick, which acted like a third leg. His hat bounced up a down on his head, threatening to fall off at every turn, his coat tails streamed out behind him and his shoes left little oily polish marks on the floor as he whizzed along.

Finally, we reached a small door marked “Orders”. Diddle pulled out a large key, opened the door, and ushered us inside. Mom and Dad had to duck to go through the door, which was obviously built for people of Diddle's height.

When we entered, I looked around in wonder. Unlike the rest of the shop, this room was squeaky clean. I mean, really clean. I almost slipped on the shiny floor. I grabbed a chair, which slid a few inches before stopping. It was like friction didn't exist any more.

I managed to seat myself, not without some difficulty, and my chair ended up on the other side of the room. When everyone was seated, Diddle sort of skated across the floor to an enormous stack of red plastic accordions. He climbed a ladder located next to the pile, grabbed an accordion, leaped off the ladder, and skated back over to us.

“This accordion,” he began, “is not your average accordion. No, this is a miracle of modern technology, designed by yours truly, D. Diddle, and created by some of the best instrument makers in China.”

Dad, sensing that more was to come, pulled out his earmuffs and stuffed them over his ears. I wished that I'd brought earmuffs. Jeffery, on the other hand, looked like he wouldn't miss this for all the world.

Diddle went on, seeming not to notice Dad. “It used Dual-Pump® technology, incorporates the use of ActionKeys®, allowing you to reach higher frequencies and pitches, and is made from a firm White Pine base overlaid by attractive red plastic!”

Dad yawned, but Diddle was really getting into his stride now.

“Due to the grain of the wood that I, personally, handpick from the White Pine Processing Company, the vibrations and fluctuations of the music are not lost, but instead amplified to create a better sound!”

What he's saying, I though glumly, is it's really loud.

“Yes, all this and more is available to you for only 89.99 plus tax! It's the lowest you can pay for the best you can get!”

“I'll buy it!” cried Jeffery, lost in visions of accordions.

“Diddles Discount Instruments,” cried Diddle, “are dedicated to bringing you the music

of tomorrow... today!!!”

Oh boy..... I thought.

Mom looked at Diddle like he was crazy. Dad asked her if it was over yet.

Jeffery pulled out the 100 dollars he had saved up for this very moment. “Is this enough?” he asked, looking worried.

Diddle grabbed the wad of money and flicked through it. “Yes, it is!” he said, passing Jeffery the accordion. Jeffery looked like he was going to faint.

“And for orders over 50 dollars,” said Diddle, pushing the money into one of his coat's many pockets. “You get a free kazoo!” He handed a kazoo to Jeffery. Jeffery's eyes filled with tears of joy.

Diddle smiled at Jeffery with a twinkle in his eye. It was a fake twinkle, but a twinkle nonetheless. “Why don't you try it out, my boy?” he asked.

Jeffery jumped up, slung the cord over his neck, and began to play. My Dad squeezed his hands over his earmuffs. I covered my ears but that didn't help much. Diddle had been right. That thing *was* loud.

When my hearing returned, Diddle was applauding Jeffery, tears of joy sliding down his cheeks. “Bravo, my boy, bravo!” he cried. “You have quite a future ahead of you! Whatever anyone says, continue to play! Genius like that cannot be stopped!”

With that, he opened a small door marked “Exit” and ushered us out into the parking lot. As we piled into the car, Jeffery starting to play again.

There was something fishy about that, I thought. Apart from the fact that he liked Jeffery's music.

As the groans of the accordion filled my ears, I thought to myself: that doesn't sound wonderful at all. That sounds like the moans of the dead.

It wasn't long before I'd find out just how right I was.

Chapter 2

When it came time to go to school the next morning, my backpack was stuffed full of the usual pile of pencils, pens, paper, erasers, and workbooks that you needed to survive at Bartleby Hill middle school. I was wrapped in a thick coat and a woolly hat was on my head, thanks to my mother, who said that I had to dress up warm or I'd catch hypothermia. I pointed out that the thermometer was hovering around the sixty-five mark, but my logic had no effect. So here I was, sweating away, waiting for my brother to get out here with me.

“Jeffery, get out here right now!” I yelled, and a flock of startled sparrows took flight and flew away as fast as they could. My brother tumbled down the stairs. His accordion was hung around his neck with a special strap. He charged out the front door, pulling on his backpack as he went. I stood staring at him, my jaw hanging wide open.

“What, Billy?” asked my brother sarcastically as he marched down the driveway. “Am I not allowed to do what I like with my possessions?”

I followed him, still staring wide eyed at him. “You're not taking it to school, are you?”

I asked, dreading the answer I knew would come.

“Of course!” said my brother said. “Besides, Mary likes guys who play accordions!”

“No, she likes guys who play guitars. There is a difference.”

“Guitars, accordions, same thing. When everyone hears how great my playing is, they'll all beg to hear more.” He gave his accordion an experimental squeeze. It moaned.

I trudged on in gloomy silence, trying to ignore the groans from the monster accordion. What would my friends think? Even worse, what would Joe Baker think? Joe Baker had been the bane of my life since first grade, and was always looking for new ways to needle me. I'd probably have beaten him up by now, but he was always surrounded by a crowd of large boys who looked like they might grow up and be in a gang. Heck, they might be in a gang now!

Soon the familiar shape of Bartelby Hill middle school loomed in the distance. It looked like every single middle school you have ever seen. Come on, can't the architects think of something a bit more interesting? There must be a better design! Anyway, as we walked down the block towards it, I noticed a large blob coming towards us. As the blob came closer, it became a crowd of thuggish boys (some of them looked like they were shaving!). I could see Joe Baker striding before them now. They stopped before us, effectively forming a wall between us and the school.

“Well, well, well, what have we here?” cackled Joe Baker. That's right, he actually cackled. A really megalomaniac wanna-be.

“You know what you have here, Bagels, so just let us go to school.” I said as calmly as I could with my brain going “Warning! Warning! Do not be a wise-guy!”.

Joe sneered at me. It was a good sneer. It looked like he had been working on it.

“Really, Billy Boy, is that the best you can do? Bagels... ha ha HA!”

On cue, his thugs laughed in perfect unison. It was rather funny, but I wasn't laughing. You didn't laugh at a twelve-year-old who shaves.

“What's this, Jefferson?” asked Joe, pointing at my brother. “Learning to play, are you?”

“Yeah, I am!” said Jeffery.

“Well, I am sure we'd just love to hear some of your work, WOULDN'T WE??” he turned to the thugs. They nodded sycophantly.

Jeffery stood there, a big happy smile on his face. “You want to hear my music?” he said.

Oh no oh no oh no oh no.... I thought.

“Yes, we do.” said Joe. His smile was pure evil, and he nodded to his thugs. They crowded closer.

“Alright, then!” cried Jeffery, swinging the accordion around and striking a pose. The very air seemed to crackle with tension. Joe was starting to look a bit worried.

Jeffery knuckled down and began to play. The sound waves burst outward, shaking trees and knocking a garden gnome into a goldfish pond. My woolly hat protected me from the worst of the blast (thank you, mom!), but Joe and his thugs took the full brunt of the music.

Joe sunk down on his knees and shook his head back and forth. His thugs scattered in

all directions, some keeling over where they stood. When Jeffery finished, there was not a single person left standing except Jeffery and me. I wandered over to Joe Baker.

“That.... was.... awful....” he moaned.

“Oh, keep your stupid opinions to yourself.” I said, and punched him.

Later, when I had wandered into school and was walking down the hall to my homeroom, someone tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around with dread, expecting to see a group of thugs led by a black-eyed Joe Baker (complements of Bobby), but it was Grace, who runs our school newsletter.

“Okay, first thing, what's with your brother's accordion?” she asked. Behind was her lackey, Brian, who was writing down what she had just said.

“Uh, well, it's an accordion.” I said.

Grace gave me an “what is your problem” look as Brian feverishly wrote down “Uh, well, it's an accordion.”

“Apart from it being an accordion, which I believe we already discussed...” Grace said, checking through her notebook “...why does he have it?”

“Well, because he bought it.” I said. Never tell the press too much information.

“What is he going to do with it?”

“I don't know!” I cried. “Now stop asking me questions!”

“Fine, fine.” Grace said nicely. “But perhaps you might like to explain why these are pinned up in the halls.” She handed me a piece of paper. It bore a picture of what appeared to be spaghetti going down the drain, but as I read the words beneath, which read “Wanted: dead or alive (but dead is best), Bobby. Report to Joe Baker, for your reward: \$20 plus a Get Out of Bullying Free Card.”, turned out to be me.

Joe Baker had been a busy boy in the last fifteen minutes.

“I removed this one from the gym door. I was wondering if you know what is going on here? I mean, Joe Baker has only once placed a price of the head of a kid once before, that was... two years ago.” Grace looked at me questioningly, but I was wearing my poker face.

“Not a thing.” I said as firmly as I could.

Grace shrugged and motioned for Brian to stop writing. He paused in mid-word, his eyebrows creased in confusion as he wrote down that she was waving at him. Then he put the pad away sheepishly.

Grace and Brian turned to leave, but I tapped Grace on the shoulder as she left. She turned around.

“Um.... what happened to the last kid that got on the bad side of Joe Baker?” I asked. Grace looked a bit sickened. “I'd rather not say.” she grimaced. Then she and Brian walked quickly away, Brian giving me a sympathetic look as he went.

Gulp.

Classes that morning were rather uneventful. Well, not really. But Miss Anderson was very nice about the table, and the fish survived. Anyway, the first time anything really

eventful happened was during lunch break.

I kept my distance from Joe and his thugs, whose eyes followed me across the room like they were stuck to me with glue. A scared-looking little kid was sitting next to Joe, and was carefully copying out wanted posters that Joe was dictating. As I walked past the table, I could hear him say:

“And raise the reward to \$30 and two Get Out of Bullying Free cards. Oh, but they have to bring me him and his brother's accordion.”

“Yes sir!” said the little kid unhappily. He placed the finished poster into a pile of them.

I sat down at the table furthest away from Joe, which happened to be the loser table. It was the seating place of the outcasts who were too stupid or ugly (or had too many brothers with accordions) to sit with the other kids. I sat down next to my friend Mark, who was stabbing his mashed potatoes with his fork in a depressed kind of way.

“What's the matter, Mark?” I said, looking at my tray of food for the first time to see that it was not so much pizza with a bit of tomato sauce, as heaps of tomato sauce with some pizza hidden underneath it.

“I have an ethical question.” said Mark, not turning to face me.

“Go ahead.”

“Well, suppose a... person... wanted to get twenty bucks to buy a game... but to get that twenty bucks required turning in a close friend to a.... uh.. bully, should I do it?” asked Mark.

“No, you should not. I can't believe you value twenty dollars more than me!” I said.

“No, no, it was a totally hypothetical question!” squeaked Mark hurriedly.

“Dream on, buddy. Do you think I'm that gullible?” I said.

Mark didn't say anything, just returned to trying to stab his mashed potatoes into submission. As I looked around, I could see eyes all around the cafeteria focusing on me. The other kids seemed to be sizing me up, trying to gage how much of a fight I would put up if caught. As I looked at Joe Baker, he smiled triumphantly at me, and I quickly turned back to my lunch, which, if a bit disturbing, was not trying to kill me.

After taking a few bites of the pizza, I changed my mind on that one. Whoever had made this was obsessed with tomato sauce.

As I struggled to digest the pizza, I heard a horrible noise behind. Oh no oh no oh no... I thought as I turned to see Jeffery pulling out his accordion and showing it to a crowd of disinterested-looking kids.

“You want me to play?” I heard Jeffery ask. No one nodded or said yes, but Jeffery put his fingers on the keys and began to play anyway. I quickly dived under the table and shoved my hands over my ears.

There was a sound like a choir of frogs, an unearthly screech, and then what sounded like a tormented version of “Casey Jones”. The floor buckled beneath me and the table actually moved a few inches, but I grabbed a table leg and held firm.

As the song neared its finale, I saw someone who was caught out in the open tumbling across the floor as fast as he could, powered partly by the shocks-waves emanating from Jeffery and partly by his desire to get away from the music. It was Mark. I watched him

half-run, half, tumble across the cafeteria floor and slam into a wall.

Finally, the song stopped, and Jeffery stood in the middle of the cafeteria looking very proud of himself. He was