

The Little Scottish Ghost

Franz Hohler | Werner Maurer

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Once upon a time there was a little ghost who lived in a castle in Scotland. Her parents were not as young as they used to be, and they were getting rather tired of haunting.

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So they showed Little Ghost all the things she had to do to frighten people.

When Father Ghost passed the fireplace, the lord and lady of the castle were scared out of their wits. They clung tightly to each other.



First of all, Father Ghost gave her lessons down in the cellar. He showed her how to glide mysteriously along corridors, how to put her head through a wall, and how to make things move from one place to another.

When they had practiced long enough, Father Ghost took Little Ghost out haunting for the first time. "Today," he told Little Ghost, "we are going to glide mysteriously past the fireplace in the great hall with axes stuck in our heads."



But when Little Ghost passed by doing just the same, they laughed like anything, and they felt perfectly all right again.



"Well," said Father Ghost afterward, "you'll have to learn to be weirder and scarier."



The next day Mother Ghost showed Little Ghost how to haunt the linen cupboard and get in between the sheets to scare the laundry maid when she came to make the beds.



The laundry maid was scared stiff at the sight of Mother Ghost,
and she ran off to find the lady of the castle.

"How sweet!" And she went to fetch her husband.
But when they came back, Little Ghost had disappeared.
"Where did she go?" cried the lady of the castle.



When they both came back to the linen cupboard,
they found Little Ghost there, trying to frighten them.
"Oh, look! A little ghost!" said the lady of the castle.



Then the suit of armor behind them slowly raised its arm.
But when it was at shoulder height, it dropped again.
The suit of armor fell to the ground with a clatter, and
Little Ghost toppled out with some nasty cuts and bruises.

Luckily the lady of the castle had plenty of ointment and bandages to make Little Ghost better, and Little Ghost was soon well enough to go back to her mother and father.



When Little Ghost was back home again, Mother Ghost said, "You'll just have to learn to be even weirder and scarier." And Little Ghost promised to do her best.



"Right," said Father Ghost the next evening, "now I'll teach you how to haunt the castle with balls and chains. That always works wonders."



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He stood at the top of the stairs leading down to the great hall, fastened two heavy balls and chains to his feet, and then, moaning horribly, shuffled downstairs—across the hall—and finally disappeared up the chimney.



The lady of the castle was pale with terror, clutching the lord of the castle, who was holding on to the back of his chair.



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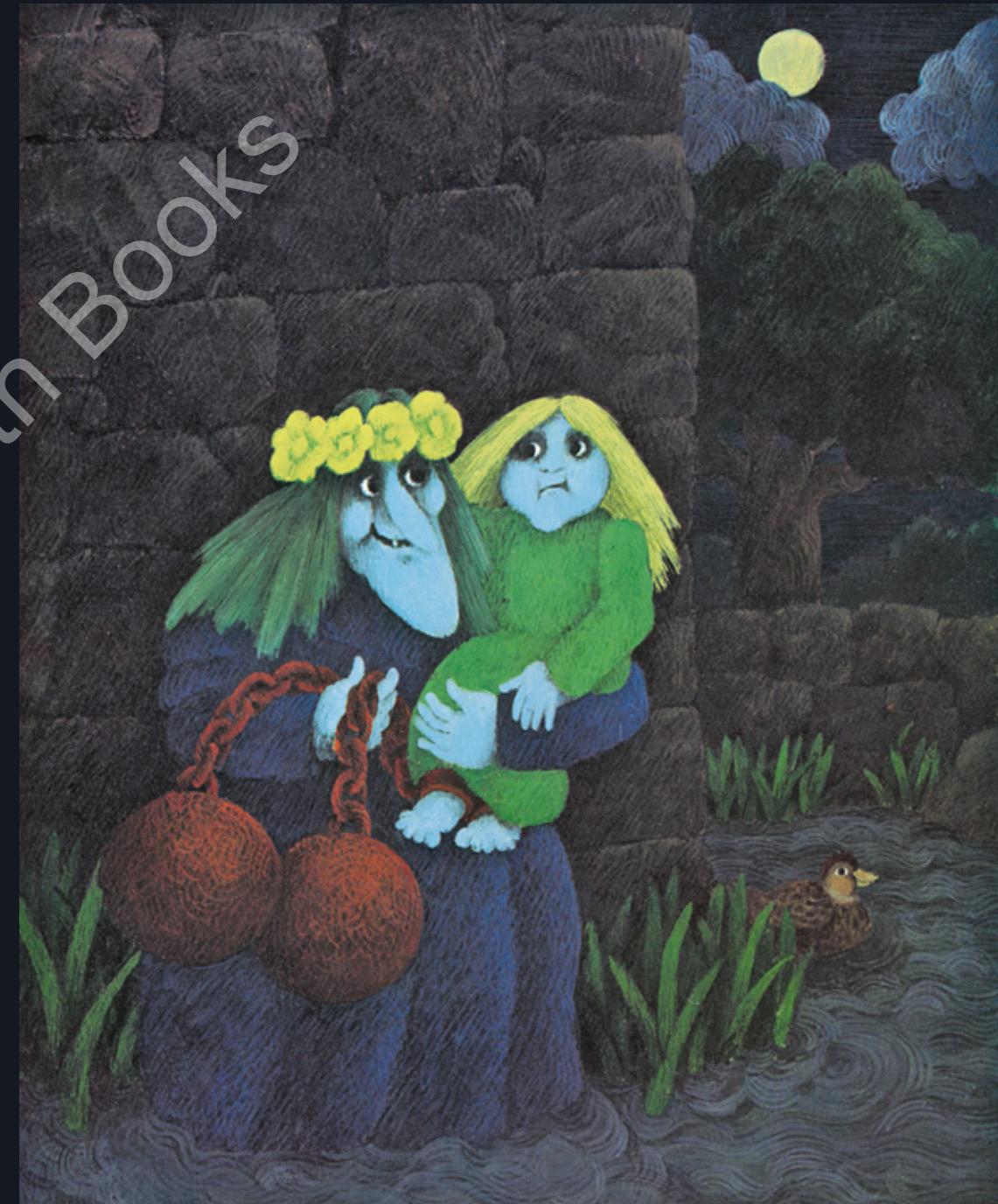
Little Ghost thought that was fun. As soon as Father Ghost was back, she fastened the balls and chains to her own feet and set off. But the balls and chains were so heavy they rolled downstairs, out of control, taking Little Ghost with them.



They went all the way through the hall, crashed through a windowpane, and landed in the castle moat, along with Little Ghost herself.



And if Mother Ghost had not been on the spot, having guessed something of the sort might happen, Little Ghost might have been drowned.



"Was I any good that time?" she asked when she was nice and dry again.

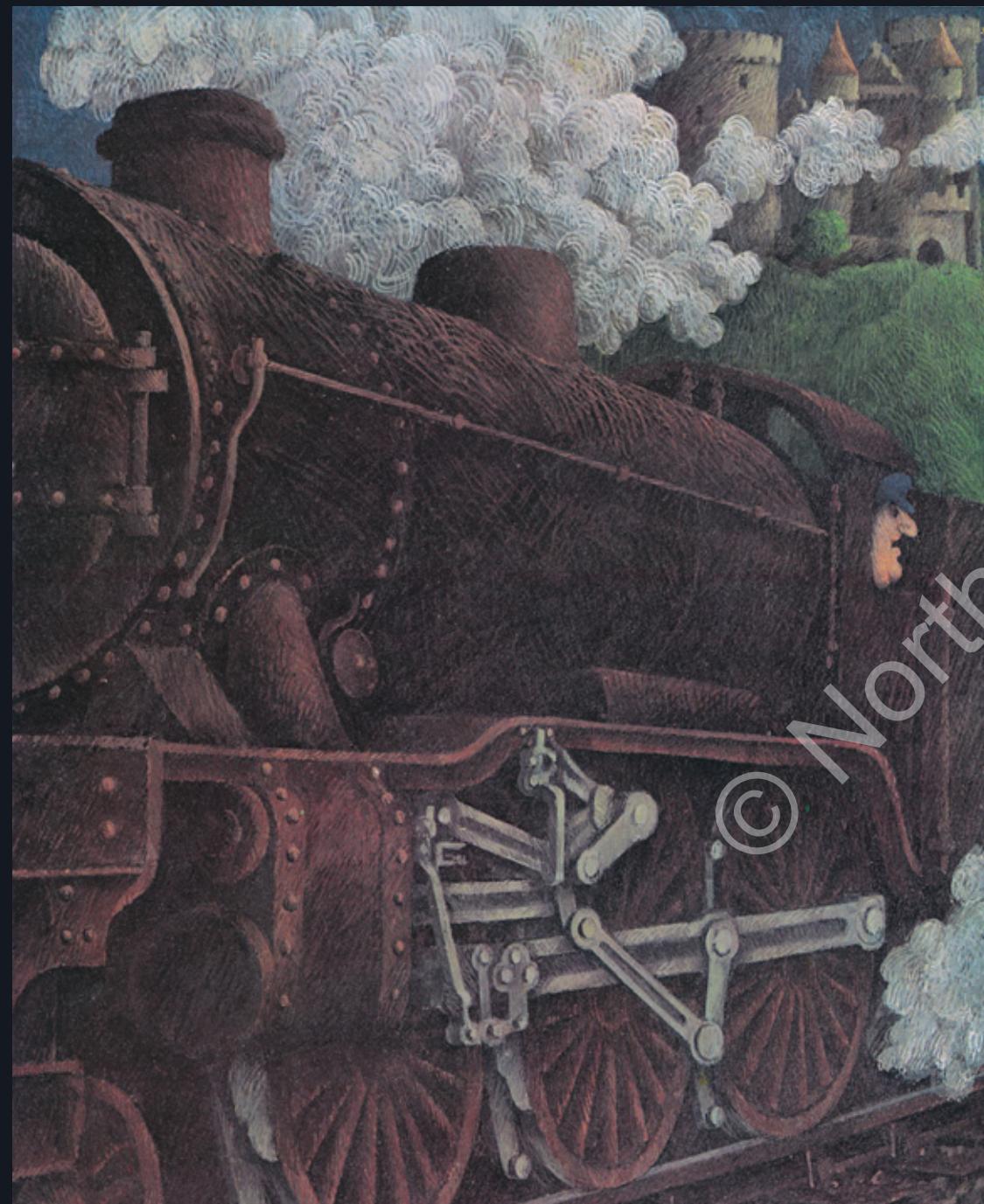
"No," said Father Ghost. "You made a lot of noise, that's all. You must learn to be really weird and scary!"

"But how?" asked Little Ghost.

"I know!" said Father Ghost. "We'll send you to the weirdest, scariest ghost in all Scotland for haunting lessons. He lives in Whistlefield, and you can start tomorrow."



The next evening when the train stopped at Whistlefield Station, the engineer popped his head out of the window of his cab, shouted, "Whistlefield!" and popped his head back in again.



No one got out except for Little Ghost, and as soon as she was there on the station's tiny platform, the train went on again.



The castle stood up above a little village, and as Little Ghost walked through the village she could see all the people looking out of the windows. But suddenly terror came over their faces, and they hurried away behind their curtains. A dreadful, long-drawn-out whimpering sound could be heard coming from the castle, more of a wail really, and it was so loud that it made the houses tremble.

Little Ghost jumped for joy. "I'm sure I'll learn how to haunt in a really weird, scary way here," she thought, and she ran to the castle as fast as she could go.



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She knocked at the castle door, but it was shut, and no one came to open it. So she crept in through a cellar window and started looking for the Whistlefield Ghost. But there was no sign of him.

Little Ghost decided to call out. "Hello!" she shouted. There was a dreadful howl behind her. It made the whole cellar tremble, and when she turned round she saw the Whistlefield Ghost.



"Who are you?" asked the **weirdest** and **scariest ghost** in all Scotland, in hollow tones.

Little Ghost waited impatiently all that night and all the next day. She explored the whole castle and found that there was no one living there anymore.



"I'm a little ghost," said Little Ghost, "and I'd like to have some haunting lessons from you, because you're the **weirdest** and **scariest ghost** in all Scotland."

"Oh," said the Whistlefield Ghost. "Well, you gave me a nasty fright."

"Will you give me lessons?"

"All right. You can start tomorrow night."



When she looked down at the village, she saw that the people were very frightened; they walked around all hunched up, and they often glanced timidly at the castle.



When evening came at last, she went down to the cellar
where she had met the weird, scary ghost and shouted out,
"Hello!"

"Ooooooh!" cried the weird Whistlefield Ghost, howling so
loud that he made the windowpanes rattle.



"How do you manage to wail in such a scary way?"
asked Little Ghost.
"Because I'm so scared."

"I thought it was you who scared other people."
"No. I'm the one who's scared. I'm so scared that I wail
with terror."
"What are you scared of?" asked Little Ghost.
"I'm scared of the least little sound. I'm afraid it might be
a weird, scary ghost or something. You come over to the
castle with me, and you'll see what I mean."



They went up the cellar steps together; and as they were about to go through the door to the entrance hall, the Whistlefield Ghost said, "Watch out, this door creaks dreadfully."



And he pushed the door open. It certainly creaked badly, but the Whistlefield Ghost didn't howl or wail. "Aren't you scared this time?" asked Little Ghost.



"No," said the weird and scary Whistlefield Ghost, "and it's the very first time I haven't been scared of that noise. How odd! Watch out—the wind will come howling down the chimney now. It's a very scary sound."



Sure enough, the wind did come whistling down the chimney, but the scary Whistlefield Ghost did not move a muscle. "Aren't you afraid of that either?" asked Little Ghost. "No," said the weird Whistlefield Ghost. "I'm not afraid of that either, not this time. I can't understand it. When I'm on my own, I'm always scared."

The weird Whistlefield Ghost showed Little Ghost all sorts of other places that were usually very creepy and scary, such as the dungeons and the castle battlements and the wine cellar.



"I know what it is!" said Little Ghost. "It's because you're not alone. Once I've gone again, you can carry on being scared and creepy."



"True," said the weird Whistlefield Ghost sadly. "Couldn't you stay a bit longer?"

"Yes, all right," said Little Ghost.

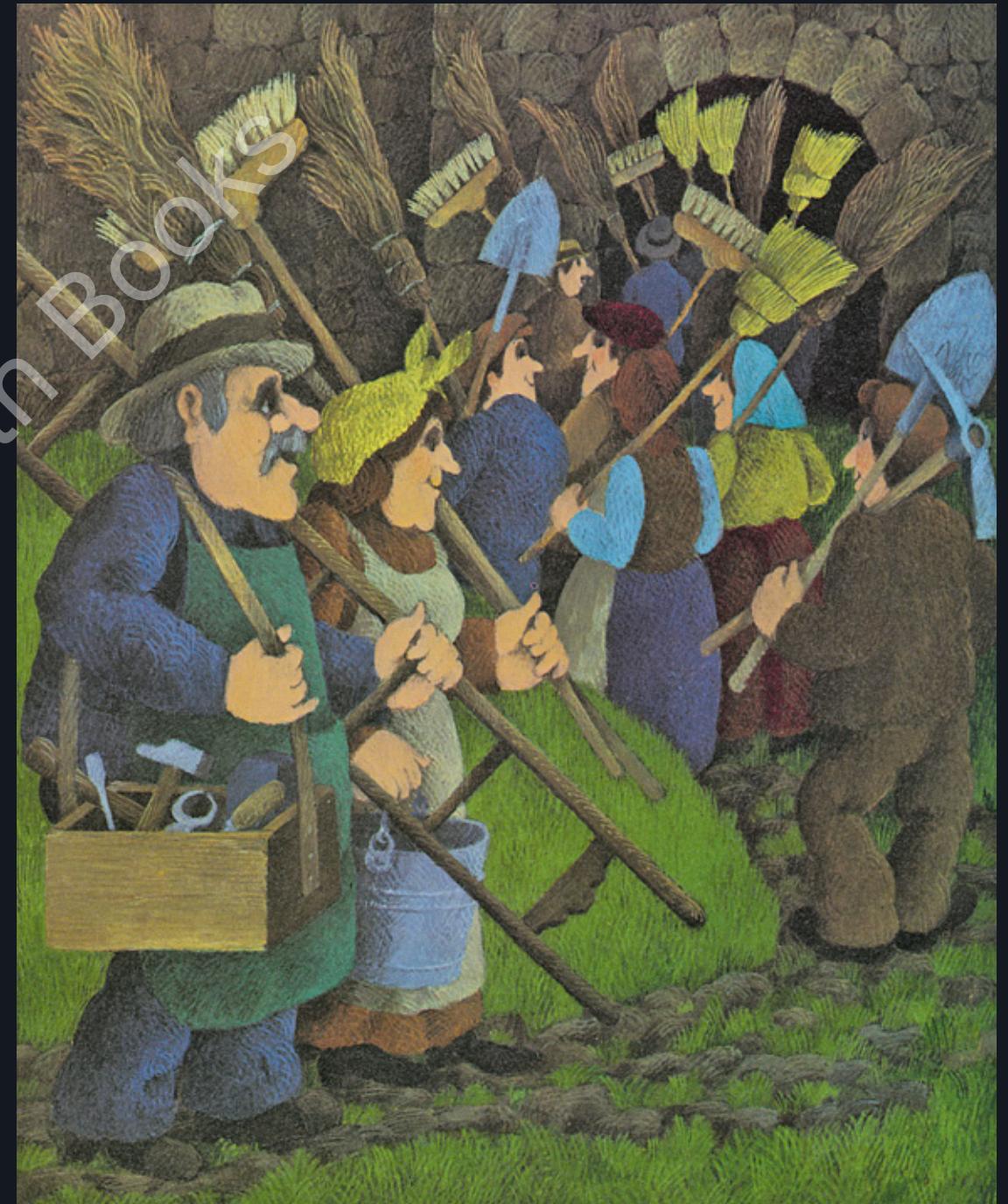


She stayed several more days, and the old Whistlefield Ghost did not make any more weird noises because he was not scared now and so the people down in the village were not scared any longer either.



They ventured to come out of their houses and start work again.

When Little Ghost had been there a few weeks, the village people came up to the castle to set it right—sweeping away the cobwebs and airing out all the rooms.



And when Little Ghost wrote to ask her parents if they would like to move to Whistlefield too . . .



they said yes, they thought that was a good idea.
So they came.



And there was a big party up at the castle for all the village people,



and the funniest part of the whole party was when Little Ghost showed everyone how she had tried to learn to haunt.



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was born in Biel, Switzerland, and grew up in Olten. He discontinued his German and Romance studies in Zurich after five semesters and has been a freelance writer since then. He writes novels, poems, short stories, cabaret programs, plays, and children's books. His work has been awarded numerous prizes, including the Swiss Youth Book Prize, the City of Zurich Art Prize, and the Johann Peter Lever Prize. He lives in Zurich, Switzerland, with his wife.

Werner Maurer

was born in Spiez, Switzerland. After training at the Bern School of Applied Arts and the State Art Academy in Stuttgart, he worked as a freelance illustrator and book designer. He collaborated with Regina Indermühle, creating several popular cartoons for children. He received awards for his work, among others in the competition "The Most Beautiful Books" in Germany and Switzerland and the honorary diploma of the H. C. Andersen Prize. Until his death in 2021 he devoted himself enthusiastically to gravure printing—a type of printing valued for its excellent print quality, still used for newspapers, postcards, and magazines.

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First published in Switzerland in 1979 by Sauerländer Verlage under the title
IN EINEM SCHLOSS IN SCHOTTLAND LEBTE EINMAL EIN JUNGES GESPENST.

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First published in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand
in 1980 by Hutchinson Junior Books, London, UK.

This edition first published in 2023.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

Printed in Latvia

ISBN: 978-0-7358-4509-1

1 3 5 7 9 • 1 0 8 6 4 2

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Little Ghost is learning how to haunt, but nothing goes right. Her ball and chain run away with her, her clanking armor falls on top of her, and instead of terrifying people, she just makes them laugh.

"You must go to the ghost of Whistlefield," says Father Ghost. "If anyone can teach you to be scary, he can."

When Little Ghost goes to Whistlefield, she sees the villagers shaking with fear as blood-curdling shrieks echo from the gloomy castle. But when Little Ghost arrives there, she does not find at all what she expected.

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US \$19.95 • CAN \$26.95

ISBN 978-0-7358-4509-1



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