

ALEX MORGAN

Paranormal Investigator



THE  
HOWARDSEFIELD  
HORROR

JAY MASON

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# The Series

Alexandra Morgan, known as Alex, is a young, bright 19 yr old at college student and the daughter of two prize-winning scientists. What no one knows: In her free time Alex is a paranormal investigator who takes on a variety of strange and mysterious cases ... Together with her best friend Rusty and a mysterious stranger called c0nundrum she unravels a conspiracy that will put her own life and that of her family in danger ...

# About the Book

Alex is convinced the lights that have been hovering over the local cornfields are connected to the activities at the high security science Centre where her parents work. But then Rusty's younger sister, Cat, hopeful of seeing a UFO, is chased by a hideous creature. She claims that this is the monster from the local ghostly legend, the Howardsfield Horror. Alex and Rusty decide to investigate — until Joe Trend, the famous actor and amateur UFOlogist, gets in their way ...

# The Author

Jay Mason is a pen name of Caroline Dunford, who lives in Scotland in a cottage by the sea with her partner and her two young sons. As all authors are required to have as much life experience as possible she has been, at various times, a drama coach, an archery instructor, a counsellor, a qualified psychotherapist, a charity worker, a journalist, a voice actor, a hypnotherapist, and a playwright. Today she writes mainly novels, the odd (often very odd) short story, theatre plays, the occasional article, teaches and mentors. She can't remember a time when she didn't write or tell stories and seriously doubts that she could remain sane if she stopped doing so.

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Episode 2



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# 1. Am I in a B movie?

With the fall came the new college year. Alex stood brushing her long curly black hair. Her reflection in the mirror told her she'd changed. She had actually chosen what she would wear today rather than just grabbing what was clean from her closet. Her hair was neater — she drew the line at wasting time straightening it. And she had invested in mascara for the first time in her nineteen and a half years. The results were quite alarming. After the initial smudges that she had to scrub off while she was getting used to applying the tiny wand, she now had what looked like giant spiders erupting from her eyelids. She put the brush down and checked the image in the magazine she had been copying. Yes, that was what she was supposed to look like. Did boys really like girls with arachnid-enhanced faces? Weird, thought Alex, but then so much about this term was weird. Besides, she wasn't interested in any particular boy. She just wanted to be more normal this term. No way would she be auditioning for cheerleader at her community college, but a nice, ordinary pretty girl that no-one would look at strangely would do for her. This year, she vowed, she would not only keep her identity as a paranormal investigator properly secret, she would also keep well away from doing anything weird around college.

She picked up her college bag with its shiny new badges she'd bought off the internet, and slung it across her chest. She headed downstairs to find her mother, hair pulled sharply back from her face in a flawless French plait and wearing a business power suit, waiting by the door.

"Goodness," said Irene Morgan, "I barely recognise you."



“I take it that’s a good thing?” said Alex, trying hard to keep the edge out of her voice.

“I think your mother means you look tidy,” said a voice from behind her. “Something that has long eluded me.” Alex turned to see her father, Lewis, shambling over. As ever he was dressed like a refugee from the eighties in a baggy brown corduroy suit with a colourful striped jumper underneath.

“Oh, I’ve given up on you,” said Irene. “And Alex doesn’t look tidy. She looks nice. She looks like a proper girl. Although it would be nice to see you in a dress for once, Alex, rather than jeans.”

“Be serious, Irene,” said Lewis, “no one wears dresses in college.”

“I did,” answered Alex’s mother haughtily.

“Yeah, you went to Oxford. Alex is at the local community college. We’re lucky they wear shoes.”

Alex saw her mother shudder. She knew her father was trying to help, but it felt like yet another dig at her failure to reach the academic heights that both her scientist parents had achieved.

“Car,” said her mother. “Or we will be late. Can we drop you, Alex?”

“No, it’s fine,” said Alex. “I enjoy the walk.”

Her mother smiled thinly and held open the front door. Alex gave them both a quick grin and went out. She didn’t hear the door close behind her, but she refused to turn round. Ever since she had what her mother referred to as “another little wobble”, both her parents had been watching her like hawks. She walked down the path slowly, knowing it was petty, but also hoping it would make her parents late for their work at the Center.

Everyone came to the first day of the new academic year; the corridors were bursting with students hailing friends

they hadn't seen since the start of the summer and a large number unfamiliar excited faces, who Alex realised with a start, were the new first years. Of course, being a community college there were people of all ages, including mums, who never given education a real go, returning now their kids were old enough to be in school. Alex knew from experience that the corridors would never again be as busy as today and that many of these people would never be seen again. However, the latter was generally due to the shock of finding out that even community college required students to complete a certain work load rather than any paranormal phenomena.

In front of the large notice board came the worst press of people. Alex, who hated crowds, tried to relax and let herself go with the flow. Literally. As she passed the notice board one announcement caught her attention. Wanted: Walk on ... and then her attention was torn away by someone grabbing her shoulders.

"Hey you!" said Rusty in her ear. She turned her head and managed to twist herself slightly towards him. His hair was ruffled and he had a gleeful grin on his amiable, freckled face. "Just like being on the soccer pitch! Grand scrum, isn't it?"

"Do they have scrums in soccer?" asked Alex.

"Don't be so pedantic! Anyhoo, I wanted to talk to you. You know they're going to burn the cornfields soon." Rusty contorted his face in a grimace.

Alex looked away. The crowd had started to move again. "What are you talking about?"

"You know THE cornfield."

Alex's heart sunk. "We can't talk now," she said.

Rusty grabbed her wrist and pulled her from the flow. With the skill of an athlete he ducked and swerved over to the side of the corridor and then down towards the cafeteria. Alex, not as experienced as him at sport, nor as thin and lanky, bashed into several people, muttered sorry

and counted her bruises. When he finally stopped at the edge of the dining area — all the seats were full, Alex finally managed to speak, “Hey, I was in the queue for registration! Or I think I was. I’d been standing there for forty-five minutes.”

“Really?” said Rusty, frowning. “I was queueing to get my library card renewed. Registration for our year is in the Robert Mitchell building.”

“Shit,” said Alex. “Another chunk of my life wasted in this place.”

“Hey, I found you! What were the chances?” He took a breath and lowered his voice. “The lights have been out over the fields again. I think we should get out there and have a proper look around.”

“And find ourselves chased by a helicopter and a drone again?” said Alex. “You do remember how that went.”

“But we’ve not been out there.”

Alex shook her head puzzled. “I mean,” continued Rusty, “that they’re chasing something else. Something that must have escaped from the Center.”

“In which case they have doubtless caught it or it’s long gone,” said Alex practically.

“But they’ve been out two nights in a row,” said Rusty. “I don’t think it has been caught.”

“Look,” said Alex, “I want to hang Straker out to dry as much as you, but we have to be savvy about this.”

“Like a pirate?”

“What?”

“You said savvy. That’s what pirates say.”

Alex attempted without much success to minimise the scorn in her voice, “Savvy, from the French verb Savoir, to know. We need to be careful. It’s all about risk and reward. If I’m going to risk getting myself on the Center’s radar again, I need there to be a better chance of success.”

“Yeah, I suppose so,” said Rusty. “I mean with Straker poisoning you with those pills last time.”

“He didn’t poison me. He sedated me.”

“He made you act like you weren’t you. You couldn’t think straight. Seems like poisoning is the right word to me,” said Rusty.

Alex put her hand on his arm. “I’ll always be grateful to you for helping me, but he didn’t technically do anything illegal. We have to be ...”

“Careful, I know,” said Rusty.

“Let me think about it,” said Alex. “If the cornfields are due to be burnt any day soon, maybe it’s worth one final look.” Rusty’s face lit up. “Great,” he said. “When do we go?”

Alex opened her mouth to speak when behind them there was an almighty crash. They turned as one to see a scruffy man standing over a pile of broken glass and twisted metal swearing violently and with amazing fluency.

“That’s a movie light,” said Rusty.

Then a startling handsome man with lantern jaw, medium, thick, blonde hair and eyes so piercing blue it was as if they shone with an inner light, walked into the room. He was dressed in jeans and a casual grey top. He stood just under six foot tall, but had the kind of photogenic presence that is rarely seen twice in a generation. He took one look at the light and then another at the roomful of people gaping at him. “Security,” he yelled. As the room rose, almost as one, five stocky men in black surrounded him and started edging him back out of the room. Alex and Rusty were pushed aside and pinned to the wall by the press of students charging forward. “Joe,” they roared. “Joe! Joe! Joe!”

Alex saw the man mouth the words, “aw crap” before his security hustled him away.

“Those guys in black didn’t have any necks,” observed Rusty calmly as every rushed by.

“Do you think they were aliens?” asked Alex.