

1 'LISTEN TO THAT howling', Ric Salas said, looking up from the sports section of the *Oceanside Times*. 'Maybe that's Tony Robles' ghost moaning again'. He chuckled and shook his head.

Ric's younger sister, Eva, was standing by the window looking out. 'I think it's just the wind', she said. Early that afternoon a storm had moved in from the bay and a strong wind had been blowing ever since. 'But don't laugh, Ric. Those stories might be true'.

'Yeah, right, Eva', Ric said, returning his attention to the sports page. It was yesterday's paper, but he couldn't help reading it again. Most of the section was devoted to the local Friday night football games. One story was headlined, 'Junior Ric Salas Carries the Day for Pierce Panthers'. Ric proudly clipped the article. He'd had a great season so far as a full forward. In the last thirty seconds of

Friday night's game, he'd caught a pass and taken it to the goal square for the winning goal.

'I wonder how old Robles can keep living in that house with all those silly rumours floating around about his son's ghost', he said, still admiring the article.

'I suppose he stays there because that's where his son died'. Eva walked to the table and sat down. It was Sunday evening, the time set aside for the Salas children to do their homework.

Ric watched as his younger sister opened her algebra book and started her assignment. Eva's definitely the scholar of the family, Ric thought. He envied her academic abilities. School was easy for her. Ric, on the other hand, was always hanging on to a C by his fingernails.

'*Maybe* Tony died', Ric said. 'Robles claims the kid ran away'.

Eva frowned. 'Yeah, but remember Mrs Sanchez said she heard Mr Robles knock Tony down the stairs. She lives right next door to them, you know. And after that night, Tony was never seen again. That was almost ten years ago!'

‘Yeah, but there’s no proof that he died,’ Ric said. ‘It’s not as if they ever found a body, you know’.

‘Well, Mrs Sanchez thinks he’s dead’, said Eva. ‘She’s heard his ghost moaning—and she’s even seen it’. She paused and added quietly, ‘Sometimes I think I hear it too—late at night’.

Ric chuckled again. ‘Yeah, well, I’ve never seen or heard a ghost around here, Eva and I’ve lived here as long as you have’.

Mr Salas walked past the dining room and glanced in. He always worked hard for everything he had and he expected his children to do the same. He owned two small restaurants that were doing very well. Five years ago, he had been able to move his family into this house in Linden Street. It was in an older area of town, but the house was nice and exactly what his family needed. Joe Salas was a smart man with big dreams for his children.

‘You guys doing your homework?’ he asked. Ric quickly put his history book on top of the sports page. He knew his

Dad meant was *he* doing his homework. Eva always did hers.

Mr Salas walked over to Ric. He lifted up the book and frowned. 'Is *this* your homework, Ric?' he asked.

'Dad, uh...I just had to take a second to clip this article. I made quite a catch in Friday night's game, you know', Ric said.

'I'm aware of that, Ric. Your mother and I were there, remember? We're very proud of your performance in that game. But, son, football is just that—a game. And there's a time for games and a time for schoolwork'.

'Yeah, Dad', Ric sighed. He'd heard this lecture before.

'Well, it's true, son. Football won't get you anywhere in life—unless you're as good as Ablett or Carey. Your schoolwork is your future. Do I have to remind you of your midterm report? You're almost failing history'.

'All right, all right', Ric said. He was sick of the pressures his father put on him about school. Good marks didn't come as easily to him as they did to Eva.