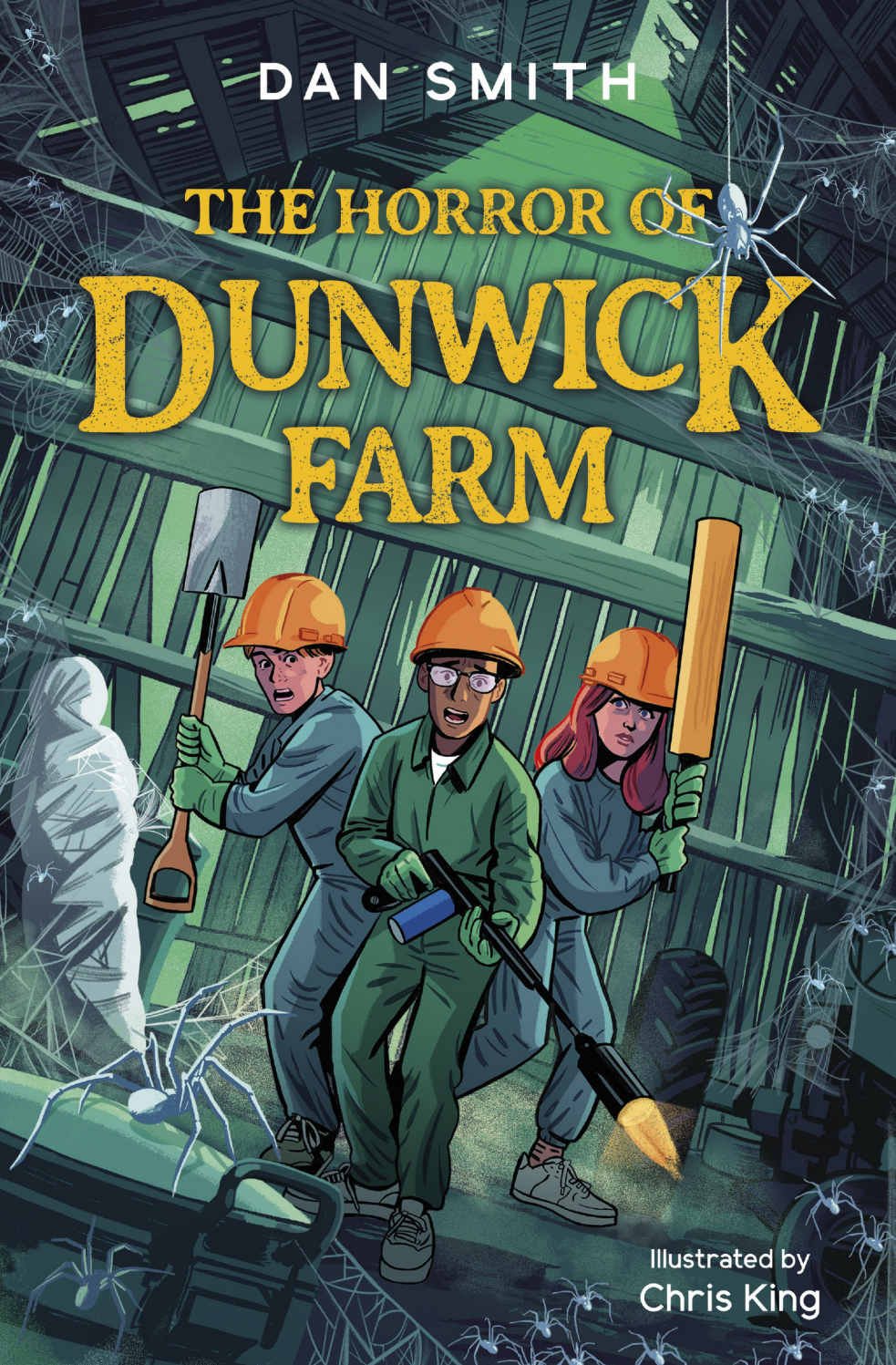


DAN SMITH

THE HORROR OF
**DUNWICK
FARM**



Illustrated by
Chris King

Also by Dan Smith:

The Invasion of Crooked Oak

The Beast of Harwood Forest

THE HORROR OF
DUNWICK
FARM

DAN SMITH

Illustrated by
Chris King

For Lennox and Theo

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CHAPTER 1

Crash

“Rats!” said Mrs Hudson, the Biology teacher.

A picture of a black rat appeared on the whiteboard. The rat was sitting on a sewage pipe, rubbing its front paws together. It had yellow front teeth and a long tail that curved behind it like a fat worm.

“Ugh,” Krish said with a shiver. “Gross.”

The sleepy kids in the Year Eight Biology class laughed.

“What’s wrong?” said Pete, who was sitting beside Krish, his best friend. “It’s just a big mouse. It’s cute.”

“Cute?” Krish adjusted his glasses. He looked at Pete as if he’d just said he liked to eat slugs.

“Rats are an example of an ‘invasive species’,” said Mrs Hudson. “Who remembers what that means?” She glared at Pete. “How about you, Pete Brundle?”

“Umm,” Pete started. “It’s ...” He brushed his mop of blond hair away from his forehead and smiled. “It’s the last lesson of the day, Miss, and my brain isn’t working properly. I’ve forgotten.”

Mrs Hudson sighed and shook her head at Pete.

Nancy Finney raised her hand. Nancy was short and skinny, with hair the colour of

autumn leaves. She was the smartest person in Year Eight.

“An ‘invasive species’,” Nancy said, “is an animal that’s brought to a place by humans and ends up causing harm.”

“Exactly,” said Mrs Hudson. “Rats were originally only found in Asia, but they boarded ships in the past and spread. Now we find them all over the world, carrying diseases and causing harm to other animals.” She paused. “I wonder if anyone can think of another example of an ‘invasive species’?”

“Rabbits?” Nancy suggested. “Someone took rabbits from England to Australia and they ended up—”

Nancy was interrupted by the spluttering of a loud engine.

Everyone looked towards the open window. There was nothing to see except the school hall

opposite. But the coughing, stuttering sound grew louder and louder, as if something were going to smash right into the classroom.

“We’re going to die!” one of the boys screamed. Kids started to panic, pushing their chairs away from their desks.

“Stay calm!” Mrs Hudson shouted. “Stay calm!”

Pete, Nancy and Krish hurried to the window, searching for the cause of the terrible noise, but saw nothing.

“Sounds like it’s going that way,” Nancy said, and pointed towards the centre of the village.

Whatever it was, it passed overhead with a deafening rumble that rattled the glass of the windows. Then the sound faded, chugging away into the distance.

A few moments later, there was a tremendous crash.

Krish was sure he felt the ground shake.