

*Susan is morphing into an abandoned Frankenstein-like creation, 'Susanstein', from Mom Margie's increasingly distant behavior. In her quest to rescue Margie from despair, Susan adopts elderly neighbors to create a supportive family. After several disappointments, Susanstein rampages, and must reawaken more than just Margie to save herself.*

## **I WAS A TEEN GHOUL**

by Katherine Warpeha and Lisa Noble

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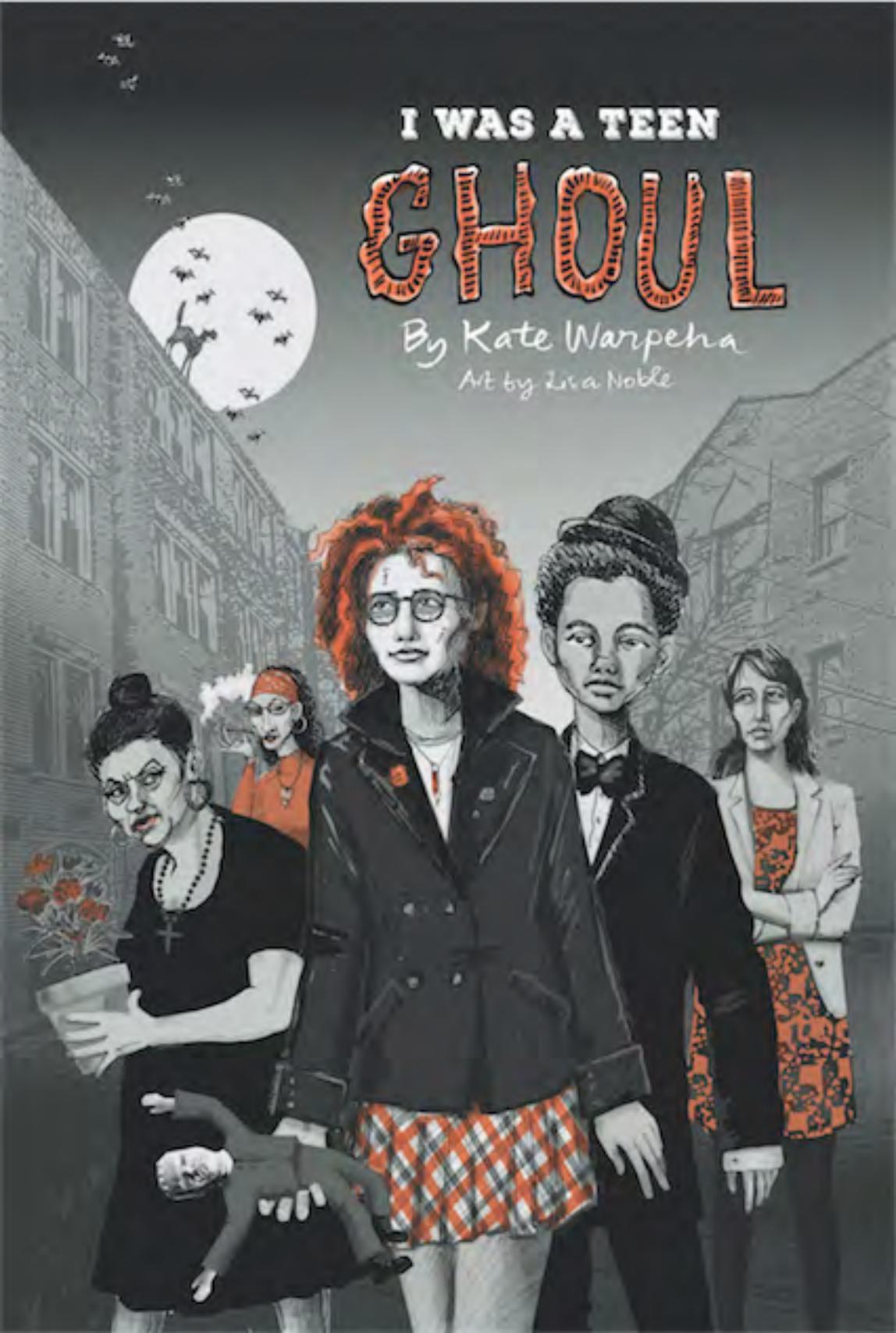
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I WAS A TEEN

# GHOUL

By Kate Warpeha

Art by Lisa Noble



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Special note — Many characters in the story are diverse cultural backgrounds, or mixed race because this is real in a city and the writer's particular experience. While many of the experiences of "Susan's" are the experiences of the writer, the story is fiction, hence all names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Discussion of cultural references including dialog are from the recollection of the author.

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effectively making a ‘bust’. My black-nailed fingers put the coat back on the Monster-doll’s spindly frame. Then from my picture pile, I picked up, then glued, a cut-out photo of Margie’s face, with stitch marks, over the Frankenstein Monster doll’s face. In the image, Margie’s hair was pulled back and curled. She smiled faintly, looking patient, happy, and rested. I sighed and stepped back, Terry gaping over my shoulder.

“Ha ha! So your Mom is a zombie now?”

“Dunno. I feel like she’s just given up.”

“Oh. I guess.”

Terry nodded, considering the situation, I could see he was thinking about my Pop’s funeral.

“We have so few relatives, we go visiting zombie-like old folks who aren’t our relatives. I mean, every week. I wish I had family here.”

For the first time, I was fully in the light. My face had white makeup, which made my dark brown eyes seem black. I put Scar Stuff on my forehead, just like a Frankenstein’s Monster should appear. It squirted out liquidy on to my dry skin, which gripped it like a miserly hands on a dollar. I put a very thin line on my cheek, then worked it into a lightning shape.

“You are looking more scary every day Su...”, Terry said shyly.

“Ha ha...” I muttered and continued, staring in the mirror.

I added black eyeliner under the lower eyelashes, winked at myself, then pulled on a somber black blazer of Margie’s. Completely Gothic-ready. We stood at either side of the table like mortuary attendants, with the Monster bearing Margie’s face lying quietly in between us. Monster doll waited



patiently on the table.

“C’mon Dr. Susanstein, what are you gonna do?”

“We’ll have a funeral for the deficient Margie, and we are gonna create a new working Margie.”

“What?!”

“Dearly beloved, Mother Margie is hardly responding. She has every sign of Death!” Terry realized I didn’t mean

really have a funeral, but he remembered *The Avengers*, and the Gothic obsessions with death and secret agents, so he joined in.

“Yes Doctor, the Dead One is leaving us.”

“I personally have created this replica of Margie Morgan since the real Margie may never return!”

The face of Margie on the doll seemed wistful and trusting. Waiting. Terry was taking things very seriously.

“She looks completely inactivated!” Terry blurted out, to which I nodded with gravity.

“The Imaginary Capacitor has malfunctioned...she can no longer express emotions!”

“Isn’t there anything we can do to save her?” Terry said with feeling.

*I hope her Mom will be okay*, he fretted internally.

“Time’s running out. If we do not create a new Margie soon...”

I stopped because I couldn’t speak any more, my eyes welled with glossy tears. Real ones. Terry realized I was panting, and blurted out,

“—this Life-less Replica Creation will take Margie’s place forever! Hey, Su, you alright?!”

“Yep.” I was able to calm myself, whew.



The now-official Margie Replica's gentle smile remained unchanged, her soft brown eyes absently looked into the distance. We heard the front door open then close, and the grave situation was shattered with our hysterical giggles as we realized Margie, my real Mom, had returned from her errand. I picked up the Margie Replica and turned off the music. Terry, at the window, peered down and saw a tall, caped character weaving a little uncertainly, coming toward us down the street, then, she waited at the corner, ready to cross Adams, to my apartment building.

“Hey—there’s Mrs. Daniels.”

“Lemme see,” I eagerly squeezed my face into the frame to look below at the sidewalk scene. Mrs. Daniels recently moved from another part of the neighborhood into the unit right under ours, and she was, according to Margie, “a Beatnik from New York”. The only definition of beatnik I knew was a jazz-loving wanderer who smoked cigarettes with a cigarette holder, and wore cat-eye spectacles and drank booze from those triangular glasses. Mrs. Daniel’s cape was bright violet, her hat wide-brimmed, almost like a musketeer’s. In fact her entire outfit was musketeer-like, including the square-toed boots. When I asked Margie if Mrs. Daniels was in the Theater, Margie smiled faintly, and mumbled that Mrs. Daniels was simply “eccentric”, and used to write for the Daily News and Trib. She hadn’t lived in our building long enough for me to meet her. She had a long, extremely pale face with heavy eye-make up of bright green shadow and black eyeliner that curved up from the outside of her eyes, and heavy mascara. She was ‘vintage’. I liked her already. Now, Mrs. Daniels was right beneath the window, about to open the door to the building when she looked up with her large dramatic eyes. Her eyelashes were like matadors capes! I wondered what Mrs. Daniels did all day, since Margie thought she was retired. She came through our groaning front door, then her cape disappeared.

Well, I started to daydream about the interesting things Mrs. Daniels did with her day. Listening to music, smoking, putting on bright make up, and talking philosophy with other beatniks. I couldn't wait to meet her. Terry burst into my reverie.

“We can go have sandwiches at my house?”

“Sure...your Gramma make soup today?”

“Oh yeah!”

Well that was enough to sell me on the idea.

The Margie Replica was placed on the lower bookshelf, in-between a cuddly elephant and a rubbery squid. She stared over the room with a distant focus. Terry left, and in following him out, the last thing I saw was the Margie Replica's unwavering gaze as I closed the door.



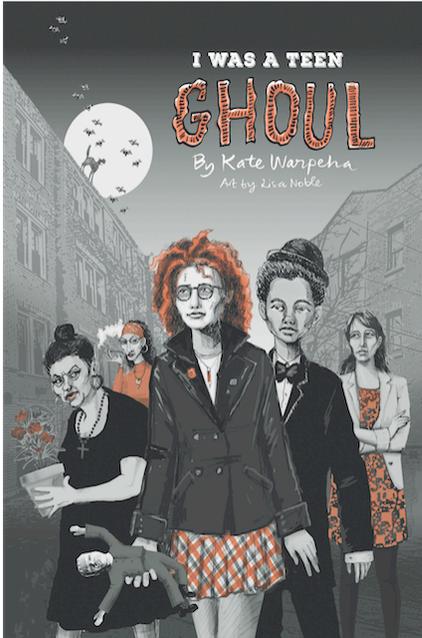
*KATE WARPEHA*

**Kate Warpeha** is a mad scientist and inventor living in Chicago. She was educated at Loyola University in Chicago in Biology, Chemistry and English, and further at University of Illinois where she earned a PhD in Biological Sciences in the Lab for Molecular Biology. She has published over 30 papers and has one patent. She is an experienced editor of creative and scientific writing.



**Lisa Noble** is a graphic designer, illustrator, children's book author and self-publisher. She and Kate started a conversation online 16 years ago and have been friends ever since. This is their first publishing collaboration. Lisa lives in Nelson, New Zealand with her son Zao, the inspiration for her children's books.





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