

HAPPILY EVER  
AFTERLIFE

# Crushed

by Orli Zuravicky

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# Chapter One

## I Cheer, You Cheer

Lucy Chadwick . . . Ghostcoming Queen. It has a nice ring to it, doesn't it? To be fair, *technically* I could be the Ghostcoming *King*, since I entered Limbo Central Middle School's dance-a-thon with my best friend, Cecily Vanderberg, and we won the title of King and Queen together.

Either way? I'm ghost royalty.

(FYI . . . I'm not joking—I'm *actually* a ghost. How, you ask? Because I'm kind of, sort of, completely . . . well, dead. But it's all good, I promise!)

Anyway, becoming Limbo Central royalty isn't a bad way to end your first two weeks in the afterlife—especially when your first day started with you developing a giant crush on Colin Reed, your older ghost tutor, which caused some ugly beef with his mean-girl girlfriend. Or should I say EX-GIRLFRIEND.

Smiley face.

Okay, okay, I know that sounds harsh, but this girl—Georgia Sinclaire—makes normal mean girls look like UNICEF volunteers! For example, on my first day as a ghost at Limbo she literally threw a ball through my head. I was pretty see-through because I was newly dead, so thankfully it didn't hurt. But it felt super weird, and, honestly, that's just rude. Then, last week, when I finally had enough energy to become solid, she threw another one at my head—and that one hit me! I had to go to the nurse and everything. So, yeah, she's definitely getting what's coming to her.

“Are you ready to go?” Cecily calls to me from inside our bathroom.

We're not only best friends, we're also roommates. I crossed over, like, a day before she did, so we've been learning everything together. Cool, right? And the best part is that we were friends even *before* we got to the afterlife, so we know each other super well.

T.G.

(Thank ghostliness. Get it?!)

Because leaving everything behind and trying to figure out your new way of afterlife all by yourself is crazy hard—not to mention lonely. Having each other here is THE BEST.

Afterlife friends forever.

“One sec,” I answer, getting my books together. I can finally carry my own backpack now, which is one of those things that you don’t normally care about until you’re suddenly unable to do it. Then you’re all like, what?! See, when you first become a ghost you need to figure out how to harness and use energy in a different way so you can interact with stuff. It’s super complicated and *totally* not worth getting into. The point? I can now carry things like a normal ghostly type person.

Yay!

“It’s seven forty-five,” she warns gently.

It’s Monday morning, and if we don’t get moving we’re going to be late for school. That’s when I notice something appear on the Tabulator screen.

“Oh goody, we got a message from Georgia,” I inform Cecily as she exits the bathroom.

“We did? Just us? What does it say?”

“No, not just us. The whole school. It’s about Cheerleading tryouts—on Wednesday evening.”

“Oh.”

Cecily falls silent after that.