



DAN SMITH

THE BEAST OF

HARWOOD FOREST

Illustrated by
Chris King

THE BEAST OF
HARWOOD
FOREST

DAN SMITH

Illustrated by
Chris King

For Emily

First published in 2021 in Great Britain by
Barrington Stoke Ltd
18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

Text © 2021 Dan Smith
Illustrations © 2021 Chris King

The moral right of Dan Smith and Chris King to be
identified as the author and illustrator of this work has been
asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and
Patents Act, 1988

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be
reproduced in whole or in any part in any form without the
written permission of the publisher

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library upon request

ISBN: 978-1-78112-987-6

Printed by Hussar Books, Poland

CONTENTS

1	Danger of Death	1
2	Heathland Camp	7
3	Firepit	12
4	The Grey Lady	17
5	The First Night	24
6	The Leap of Faith	30
7	The Great Escape	36
8	No Trespassing	44
9	Lost	50
10	Cottage in the Woods	54
11	The Hawkins Project	61
12	The Harwood Institute	68
13	Always Stick Together	75
14	Caught	82
15	A Trickle of Blood	88
16	Subject #31	91
17	The Beast of Harwood Forest	98
18	Pete's Offering	107

CHAPTER 1

Danger of Death

Pete Brundle felt as if he had been on the coach for *ever*, crushed in with an entire Year Eight class of bored and sleepy kids. On one side of the narrow road, purple heather and yellow gorse bushes stretched over the hills for miles. On the other side, a huge forest of towering spruce trees crowded in, looking as if it might take over the world.

Pete was reading his graphic novel, *Beowulf*, for the fourth time since they'd left the village of Crooked Oak. He'd just reached the part where the hero, Beowulf, was fighting the monster, Grendel, in the Great Hall. Grendel

was disgusting in the picture – all teeth and wild hair. As Pete imagined himself battling the beast, he looked out of the window and spotted some derelict buildings. They were hidden among the trees, half-collapsed and overgrown with ivy.

The edge of the forest was lined with a low fence of barbed wire. Attached to it was a sign hanging at an angle. It read:

**KEEP OUT. PROPERTY OF MOD.
DANGER OF DEATH.**

As the coach drove past, Pete turned around, but the buildings were gone, hidden by the trees. All he saw were a couple of magpies flying up into the evening sky as if something had disturbed them.

“Whoa!” said Pete. “Did you see that place?”

Sitting beside him, Pete's best friend Krish looked up from his phone.

"See what place?" said Krish.

"There were some old buildings back there," Pete told him. "Like something from a film about the end of the world."

Pete leaned forward to get their friend Nancy's attention. "How about you?" he asked her. "Did *you* see it?"

Nancy was sitting in front of Pete, beside her friend Erin.

"No, sorry," Nancy said as she turned around to look at Pete. "But have *you* seen *this* place? It's going to be an awesome trip." Nancy's pale blue eyes gleamed as she showed Pete a map of Heathland Camp on her phone. "They've got a massive zip-wire called the Leap of Faith, and their own high ropes course. There's archery and—"

“It’s a Geography field trip,” Krish said, staring at his phone again.

“Yeah,” Erin agreed. “Not an adventure holiday.”

“I’m looking forward to the Night Walk,” Pete told Nancy. “Look, I’ve got a torch.” He put down his graphic novel and pulled a headtorch from his rucksack. It was just a small lamp fixed to a headband, but Pete held it as if it were precious.

“Looks a bit old,” Nancy said. “Does it work?”

“It was my dad’s,” Pete replied. “I found it in the garage with some of his old stuff. From when he used to go camping.”

“Oh,” Nancy said. She didn’t know much about Pete’s dad except that he wasn’t alive any more.

“It’ll be really spooky,” Pete said as he fastened the headtorch around his mop of blond hair. “Out there at night. On the moor.”

“It’s a heath, not a moor,” said Erin.

“Erin’s right,” Krish agreed. “Heathland is fairly dry, with heather and gorse, and moorland is wetter, with peaty soil.”

Pete and Nancy looked at each other, then burst out laughing.

“What?” Krish asked. “I googled it.”

“You’re such a nerd,” Pete said.

Krish rolled his eyes and looked back at his phone. “The signal’s awful out here. They’re updating the Mystery Shed tomorrow, and we’ll miss the new videos.”

The Mystery Shed was their favourite website. It was full of videos and stories about weird and bizarre things around the world.

“Ugh,” Erin said. “You three and your Mystery Shed. I don’t know what you see in that rubbish. It’s all made up, you know.”

“No, it isn’t,” Pete told her.

“And you *won’t* miss the new videos, Krish,” said Nancy. “We’ll watch them together when we get back. All three of us.”

But Pete wasn’t listening any more. He was thinking about those buildings he’d seen. And that sign.