

28th September 2016

This video has been removed by the user



*Bad Things Going Down in the Woods*

8 views



## Prologue

I hear the scream and then I turn and run.

It's pitch black in these woods. The moon was shining bright earlier but now clouds have covered the sky. I grab my mobile and use it as a torch, a fluorescent square that shows me the way. The mud is squelchy and I nearly slip; I seize hold of a trunk, panting for breath. Another scream and I freeze, torn – *should I go back?* My mind tells me to reverse but my body ignores the command. I'm running, running, leaves kissing my cheeks, twigs curling against my hair, shrubs brushing my jeans. A refrain from that poem we studied in English zigzags through my mind – *'Whose woods these are I think I know. His house is in the village though . . . The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep . . . and miles to go before I sleep . . .'*

An opening; light; civilisation. I burst out into the road, doubled over, my lungs raw with pain. My car is still there, where I left it. I stab my car key at the lock and only succeed in scratching off paint. Again I try, and again, and on the third

S. K. WRIGHT

go I hit the jackpot, slide into the driver's seat and bang the door shut. I glance around, worried that someone might have seen me. But this is a quiet suburban street and there are no lights on in the houses.

I turn the engine on, startled as rock music blasts from the radio. I switch it off. I mustn't panic, I mustn't drive too fast. *The woods are lovely, dark and deep . . .* I gather myself, put the car in gear and drive away down the road, watching in my rear-view mirror as the woods shrink to silhouettes and disappear.

# Chapter 1

## Luke

The police come to get me on a regular Monday morning. It's just before 9 a.m. and I should be in assembly singing boring hymns and listening to the deputy head speak about the importance of Living Responsibly and Thinking Of Others. Instead, I'm redecorating the Gents' toilets with the help of Rob, my best mate.

I'm in pain. Rob has just shoved my head into the sink. Laughing, he spins the taps and cold water sluices over my hair, stinging icy in my ears. I'm wriggling but Rob is pressing hard on my shoulders. 'So, Batman,' he says, relishing the game, 'you're going downnn . . .' I laugh too and try to tell him he's a bastard but all I manage is a splutter. A surge of fury gives me bonus energy points. I thrash about and throw Rob off and he staggers backwards.

A pause for breath. We both stare into the mirrors. We

S. K. WRIGHT

remember that we're human, not animals. Sometimes when you're fighting, you forget to think. You forget who you are. We look at our reflections, me with my wet hair pasted over my face and Rob with red smearing from his nose. I'm taller than Rob but he's stockier than me. We've painted cuts and bruises on each other's faces; my blood is on his shirt and his blood is on my skin. Maybe we've got just a little bit out of control . . .

Rob comes at me—

I spin around and knock him hard—

He falls to the floor.

Now's my chance. I jump on top of him and grab a fistful of his hair. My anger pumps through me. I love fighting and I hate fighting. The pain lasts for days as your bruises turn all shades of blue, but there's nothing like that moment, that exhilaration when the anger and adrenaline rush so hard and fast you feel like you're on drugs. It's a dangerous moment too, because you can't say how far you'll go, how much damage you'll do, and that fear is part of the buzz.

To be honest, this isn't 100 per cent play fighting. Rob wrote something on my Facebook wall yesterday about how sexy my girlfriend is and I've been feeling pissed off about it ever since.

'So, Green Lantern —' I cry, yanking up Rob's head.

'I'm not the Green Lantern, he's a boring wimp,' Rob protests in laughter. 'I'm Spider-Man!'

'Yeah, right. So, Green Lantern, inferior hero that you

## IT ENDS WITH YOU

are – how do you like this?’ I bang his face down on the floor. I hear him cry out and inside my mum’s voice warns me – *Don’t go too far, stop, stop*—

Right then the door opens. Rob groans and spits blood onto the floor.

‘Luke Jones! Rob Pennington! What the hell are you doing!’ Mr Abdul is standing there.

Shame shrinks me. I stagger to my feet. Mr Abdul teaches Art at St Martin’s High. Most of the teachers in our school give me The Sneer, but Abdul’s different. He’s kind to me; he listens; he seems to really care.

‘Sorry.’ I wince.

‘Luke, what the hell is going on?’

I’ve not heard Abdul raise his voice like this in a long time. He’s normally very chilled.

Rob lies there, groaning as though he’s just fought for weeks in one of those ancient battles against Napoleon or something.

‘Rob, stop trying to play the sympathy card!’ I go to kick him for trying it on, when Mr Abdul cries: *‘Luke!’*

‘Sorry – but – he’s fine! We were just messing around.’

‘Luke jumped me,’ Rob groans again.

‘Hey, that’s not true!’

I suddenly become aware that Mr Abdul isn’t alone.

Police officers. Two of them, a bloke and a woman. They step forward.

‘Rob, for God’s sake, get up!’ Mr Abdul says irritably.

The police are watching us closely. I'm conscious of the little differences between me and Rob. Rob wears smart black shoes, whilst I'm in non-regulation grey trainers with holes in them; one of my laces has broken so I've replaced it with an elastic band. Rob's dark hair is neat and spruce; my brown fringe is swinging over my forehead cos I meant to cut it last night but I hadn't been able to find the scissors in the chaos of our kitchen. Rob is one of those fake rebels who swagger about and boast that they'll do anything, but the moment an adult shows they're all smiles and thank-yous and posh accents. Now he gets to his feet, smoothing down his hair, looking contrite and shooting me a glance as though I'm some thug he met in an alley.

The female police officer looks at Rob as though she wants to mother him. The man is watching me, though. He has spruce hair flecked with grey and dark, dark eyes. I realise that he looks familiar and then it comes to me.

He once arrested me for reckless driving. I can't remember his name. He seemed like one of those guys who enjoy being on a power trip. Still, that was months ago, so why are they here now?

'Luke, this is Detective Inspector Jackson and Detective Sergeant Hutton,' Mr Abdul introduces them.

Jackson. That's him. I step forwards, thinking I ought to shake their hands, but Jackson merely raises an eyebrow, so I shove my hand in my pocket. I'm never good with this sort of thing. I see the female detective staring at my shirt and I glance down, noticing the tear.



## IT ENDS WITH YOU

‘They’ve been given permission from your mother to take you to the station,’ Mr Abdul goes on.

‘Do I have to go?’ Rob cries in disbelief.

‘No, just Luke.’

Rob lets out a little cheer and Mr Abdul gives him a stern glance.

‘What’s it about?’ I ask, even though I already know. Somehow they’ve found out how much I drank at the party last Friday. I drove home oh-so-slowly, at about ten miles an hour all the way. But they must have seen me on CCTV.

‘They’re—’ Mr Abdul begins.

‘We want to speak to you in connection with the disappearance of Eva Pieachowski,’ Detective Jackson says.

Shit. My last memory of Friday evening: Eva’s face, shadowed by the woods, streaked by moonlight, her mouth an ‘O’ as she yelled abuse at me. She was so upset that night. I hope she didn’t go and do anything crazy.

Rob gives me a shocked glance, then quickly looks away. I almost feel like shouting that Rob was there on Friday night too – it was his party. But no. There’s something too familiar about this set-up. Rob politely asks for permission to leave the toilets. While he gets to go back to class scot-free, I’m walking down the corridor in between two police officers, with that sharp, twisting feeling in my stomach that tells me this is just the start of trouble. Of course, with spectacular timing, assembly has just finished. Kids are streaming out and they all get a good look at me; a couple even take pics on their phones, until Mr

Abdul tuts at them. This is bloody typical. I'm the outsider in this posh fee-paying school, here on a scholarship, not courtesy of Mummy and Daddy's millions. I'm always in the wrong place at the wrong time. *Why does this always happen to me?*

Then we're out in the playground. It's cold and I want to ask if I can run back in and get my coat. A panda car is waiting. Its blue lights whirl and flash, incongruous and alien in the daylight.

Mr Abdul leans in and whispers: 'Tuck your shirt in.'

I hastily shove it into my trousers, feeling the safety pin which is holding up my belt. His voice is tender with concern; when I look into his eyes I see fear. For one weird moment I think he's going to hug me. Mr Abdul was once a scholarship boy from a family on a low income. He's told me he sees his younger self in me.

'Be honest,' he says. 'That's all you need to do. Just tell the truth.'

I want to ask him to come with me, but when I open my mouth to say it, I worry that I sound childish and pathetic. He has classes to teach. I've let him down. I don't deserve his help.

So I shove my hands in my pockets and give him a casual smile, as though I don't really care that any of this is going on. The walk to that police car is a long and lonely one. What's happened to Eva? Is this another one of her Dares? What do they want with me?