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Opening extract from

The Devil's Angel

Written by

Kevin Brooks

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For Phil
You'll always be my Dean

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CHAPTER 1
THE BEGINNING

I first met Dean when we were both 15.

It was half way into the summer term when he showed up at school. No one knew who he was, or where he came from. There was no fuss or announcement. He just walked into the classroom one day, all alone, and sat himself down at a desk.

I pretended not to notice him, and so did everyone else. He was a new kid. You don't talk to new kids, do you? You just carry on doing what you're doing. In our case, that wasn't much. It was the first class after the morning break,

and we were all just hanging around waiting for the Art teacher to arrive.

The classroom was noisy, but not too noisy. Rowdy, but not too rowdy. Most of us were just sitting around talking, trying to look cool. A few lads were standing over by the window, watching the girls from the convent school across the road.

We all kept looking over at Dean, of course. We flicked sly glances at him, checked him out, but he didn't seem to care. He just sat there, cool as you like, sucking the end of a pencil and gazing around the room, taking it all in.

Even then, before we'd spoken a word to each other, I knew there was something special about Dean. I didn't know what it was, and I wasn't sure

if I liked it or not, but I knew it was something I couldn't resist.

CHAPTER 2
JUST LIKE THAT

Dean was a lean and hard-looking kid, like a devil's angel with dirty-blond hair. His face was pale and sharp, and his eyes burned green like the heart of a cold flame. When he smiled, it made your skin tingle.

Dean was smiling now. He was smiling to himself as he fixed his eyes on a kid called Carter. Carter was standing over by the window, mouthing off about something to anyone who'd listen. He was the hardest kid in school. He wasn't that big, or even that strong, but he was savage. Mad, too ... a bit of a psycho.

I remember one time, when we were in the line at lunch, this kid called Ross bumped into Carter by mistake and spilled a can of Coke on him. Ross tried to say sorry, but Carter didn't want to know. He just smiled a cold smile, pulled a knife from his pocket, and stuck it in Ross's leg.

Just like that.

Carter didn't even blink.

He just stabbed Ross – *thunk* – and walked away.

Crazy as hell. A proper psycho.

Anyway, Dean was watching Carter now. Watching him like a hawk. I wasn't sure if Carter was aware of it, but it was clear to me that something was about to happen. I could feel the tension in

the air. It felt dark and electric, like the weird silence you get before a thunder storm. Some of the other kids seemed to notice it too. They stopped talking, and then others stopped talking. Within a few minutes, the whole classroom had gone quiet.

Everyone was watching, waiting. Their eyes flicked between the new kid and Carter.

Dean didn't move for a while. He didn't do anything. He just sat there and soaked up the mood in the room. He was still smiling to himself, still staring, still looking calm. His eyes had cooled to a pale green shimmer of ice.

He waited until the silence was almost complete. Then – without a word – he got to his feet, strode across

the classroom, and punched Carter full in the head. *SMACK!*

It was incredible – the power, the shock. It was like something out of a film. Carter's head jerked back with a sickening crack and he fell to the floor like he was dead. For one heart-stopping moment, I thought he *was* dead. I couldn't see any movement. He wasn't groaning or sighing or holding his head. He was just lying there, flat on his face, as lifeless as a broken doll.

'God,' I thought, 'he's dead. The new kid's killed him.'

But then – just as I was thinking the worst – I saw Carter's foot twitch. It wasn't much, just a tiny little jerk, but it was good enough for me. It was good enough for Dean, too. Now he was

satisfied that Carter was still alive, he yanked him to his feet and went on to beat the living shit out of him.

I'd never seen anything like it. Dean's fists were like hammers, mashing Carter's face to a pulp.

Bam bam bam.

Smack smack smack.

It was *awesome*. Stunning. Everyone was too shocked to move. All we could do was stand there, amazed, as Dean kept thundering his fists into Carter's head. *Bam bam bam*. *Smack smack smack*. Over and over and over again.

And all the time, Dean never said a word. Never cursed. Never shouted. Never made a sound. He never even

grunted. He just kept on beating Carter, pounding away without mercy.

Then the Art teacher came in, pulled Dean off and dragged him away.

I remember a lot of things about that day. I remember that I looked around at the other kids and saw dazed looks on their faces. I remember that the nurse came in and cradled Carter's bloody head in her arms. But, most of all, I remember that Dean looked back and smiled at me as the teacher led him out of the room.

He looked as innocent as a child.