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For
the *Nerys-Jane*





I'm waiting for an angel.

My angel.

I even have a long white feather from one of her wings. It's so bright that it seems to glow with its own light.

It sounds a bit crazy, I know. I'm sitting here on the edge of the marsh watching the sky, waiting for her to come back to me. The sky is so big here. This is where the river meets the sea. Beyond the marsh are green fields dotted with sheep, and beyond those are the distant mountains.

I've been watching for days, but this evening there's a cold north wind. It feels as if winter is on its way. The trees are losing their leaves, and the setting sun is turning the sky and the big watery marsh to gold.

It's the perfect evening. I know she'll arrive tonight.

I suppose she's not really an angel. Not in the way people think about angels. But she is one to me.

She changed my life.

She saved me.

It's a long story. But it's true.

It all started a year ago, when I was kicked out of school.

Chapter 1

"Is there anything you'd like to say before you go?" said the head teacher.

We were in his office with Asim, Asim's mother, my mum and me.

I stared at the trophy cabinet behind him full of gold and silver cups. His walls were decorated with pupils' artwork, and on the table was a whole book of newspaper cuttings about all the great things that pupils from the school had done. I didn't fit in there. I wasn't a team player, as I was often told. I was letting the school down. I was letting everyone else



down. I was letting myself down. I was a let-down. A failure. A fail.

I didn't want to say anything.

"Dylan," said the head teacher again, "is there anything you want to say to Asim before you go? Do you want to say sorry?"

I looked over at Asim, at his black eye and the stitches above his eyebrow where I'd punched him. Some sticky tape held his broken glasses together.

"No," I mumbled. "He deserved it."

"Well, I think that says it all," said the head teacher as he stood up. "I think we all know what is in everyone's best interests."

Mum sniffed, and I could see she was crying. I felt mad with her for crying. I pushed my chair back, got up and walked to the door. I saw Asim's mum put her arms around my mum and hug her.

I looked at the head teacher, and he shook his head slowly at me. He didn't say another thing.

I had been expelled.

Permanently excluded.

I turned and walked out of the school and didn't look back.

*

I got in the car and just stared out of the window. It was a grey day. A no-colour day. One of those days so grey, the whole city seems like it's in black and white.

Mum started the car up and pulled away from the school. I wasn't going back there



again. Ever again. I'd got through Year Seven and into Year Eight, and I'd been kicked out before half-term. Maybe I should have been angry or scared, or even happy that it was all over. I should have felt *something*. But in truth, I didn't feel anything at all.

"Well, that's it then," said Mum.

I had nothing to say, and we drove home.

Mum pulled into the drive, and I walked into the house after her. There were boxes and bags in the hallway that hadn't been there before.

"What's going on?" I said.

Mum turned to look at me. "We can't stay here. If I can't work, I can't pay the rent."

I frowned at her. "What are you talking about?"

Mum shook her head. "How can I work if you're not at school?"

"Just go to work," I said. "I'm fine."

"You have no idea, do you?" snapped Mum. "I can't leave you on your own. I have to find a way to make sure you don't miss out on your school work."

"I don't want to do any school work," I shouted. "Don't you get it? I don't want to do anything." I stomped upstairs to my bedroom.

Mum yelled up after me, "Go on then, walk away. But this isn't just about you."

"Shut up!" I yelled. "Just shut up." I slammed my door shut.

I heard Mum storm up the stairs.



She flung the door open. “What’s happened to you, Dylan? You worked so hard to get into that grammar school, and now you’ve just thrown it all away. How has it come to this?”

“Get out,” I shouted. I grabbed my Xbox and sat on the bed.

“Fine,” said Mum. “Play computer games. Waste your life.”

I slammed the door shut behind her. I picked up the Xbox, but I was so angry I threw the console at the wall. It hit with a loud crunch and smashed into tiny bits. I stared at the pieces on the floor. There was no way it could ever be fixed.

I had nothing to do now. Nothing. It was only just past lunch-time, but I lay down on the bed, wrapped my duvet around me and tried to sleep. I had nowhere to go and nothing to do.

I just wanted to sleep and sleep and sleep for ever.

