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Opening extract from

Shivers

Written by

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Barrington Stoke

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Chapter 1
Shivers

The storm came from nowhere.

It was dark and cold, the way Mondays in December should be. The first thing I saw was a single snowflake. A minute later, I couldn't see anything else.

I turned into the estate and saw that the road was deserted. Normally there's at least one crew hanging around. They stand by the big blue bins under the first high rise, and shout at me as I walk home from school. They call me 'geek' and 'gay' and 'little perv' and all kinds of things. My life is like that – no real mates to stand up

for me, lots of time on my own. But I'm not bothered, not any more. I'm used to it.

There are normally some adults about on the estate as well. But on that day, there was no one. I was the only loser outside.

My legs started to shake with the cold. The shivers went right up into my chest. I found it hard to breathe. My mum's flat was on the other side of the estate, where it backs onto the rail line. I started to run, in the hope I could get inside before the weather got even worse. It was a stupid thing to do. The soles of my shoes had no grip and I started to slip. The snow was so heavy that it had covered everything in minutes. The parked cars looked like igloos. The little square of grass between the tower blocks was totally white. The sky had this weird orange-red glow, like there was a fire behind the clouds.

I didn't stop running, no matter how much I slid about. The jacket I had on was too thin and it didn't have a hood. My grey school trousers were soaked from the ankle up to my shins. My green bag was heavy with all the books I love to read, and it banged off my back. I was desperate to get inside. I took a left and then a right, into another street. It was also totally deserted. The

wind howled and made the snowflakes swirl. The snow had settled in drifts, piled high up every wall and door. I'd never seen anything like it. Crazy.

Home was a hundred metres away still. I started to jog a little faster but I couldn't see a thing. I knew I had to go straight but I couldn't see which way straight was. I wondered why there was so much snow. Where were all the other people? The estate felt creepy and dead. The only noise came from the storm. I couldn't even hear any cars or trains. It was like the world had ended and I was the only one left.

My right knee cracked against a parked car and I felt myself fall, almost in slow-mo. My head smacked against a bin. There was shock and pain, and then I passed out.

I came round to see a girl staring down at me. But she wasn't just any girl. She was the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen. She had bright green eyes and skin so pale that it I could almost see through it. Her hair was the colour of flames.

"Are you hurt?" she asked in a soft, low voice. It was almost a whisper.

"Er ..." I said. I couldn't think straight.

"You've cut your head," she told me.

I rubbed the side of my head as I got to my feet. When I looked at my hand I saw blood. The blood had stained the snow on the ground too. It looked sort of cool, the scarlet on the white. Like the girl's hair against her skin.

"I'm OK," I mumbled. I looked at her. Her eyes seemed to sparkle.

"Do you live near here?" she asked.

"Yeah," I replied. Then I noticed that she wasn't wearing a coat – just dark blue jeans, boots and a grey hooded top. "Aren't you cold?" I asked.

She nodded.

"I'm always cold," she said. "Come on. I'll walk you back to your house."

"Flat," I said.

"I'm sorry?"

"I live in a flat," I told her.

"Right," she said. She held out her hand. My heart jumped. I'd never held a girl's hand before. Never.

"My name's Cassie," she said. "And I don't bite."

I felt myself blush as I took her hand.

"I'm Sam," I said. Her hand was small in mine and felt like a tiny block of ice.

"You need to get some gloves," I said. It was hard not to stare at her. She was gorgeous. Like, if you could have *made* the girl I dreamed of at night, it would have been her.

"I'm used to the cold," she told me. "Come on ..."