

Lost in Nowhere

Looking back now, I suppose it seems quite a funny thing to have happened; the kind of predictable scene you might expect to find in a horror movie. But it certainly didn't seem amusing when my partner, Stephen, and I were actually standing there on that rickety old veranda.

Then the phone rang, a shrill piercing sound that shattered the crisp silence of the night. I took a wary step forward towards the open door of the house. No-one came to answer. It was no surprise; I had been knocking for attention for the past ten minutes with no response. Strange. And quite eerie too, seeing as we were lost and stranded in the middle of a dark, haunting forest.

*She holds the loaded gun warily in her hand, as she freezes like a statue against the wall while the fear churns around her body. What should she do? Her Daddy had said that he'd only be gone a little while. How does she use this thing anyway? She's heard their voices, that's all. They have a funny accent she's only ever heard on TV. They were strangers - Daddy says never to talk to strangers. Why were they here? She can't let them in - what if they found out? Suddenly the phone rang - she wasn't meant to answer that either - but what if it was her Daddy trying to help her? She grips her teddy tighter, squeezing all his breath out, as she holds hers in.*

I remember thinking 'why was this happening to us?' All we had wanted was a relaxing break away from Greg, my brother, and his family in Toronto, Canada. I knew we shouldn't have accepted his Vintage American car" - I'd called it an old banger, and I was right, because we were standing on that veranda and *it* was two miles down the dusty track silent as the night we were stranded in.

Should we answer the phone? What if they could help us, whoever it was?

'But what if they're armed?' Stephen warned as I edged forward.

'It might be the last chance we've got for help tonight,' I insisted.

Cautiously, I put my hand on the rickety old door handle. Then abruptly, the ringing stopped -just as I saw it.

*Oh no, she's coming in. She can see her now - she looks nice enough, with friendly brown eyes. But she is a **stranger**, coming into **our** house. She tries her hardest to become invisible, but it never works like it does in her story books. What will her Daddy say when he finds out? He always says that she should be brave, the one that saves the day, like the heroes and heroines in her fairytales. She **has** to be brave. So she stands up straight, plucks up her courage, ready to fight like a King... and then there was Jack, our huge but harmless pet dog, standing baring his giant teeth at them.*

After the initial fear, I went into flight mode. Stephen soon caught on. He clearly didn't want to face the huge monster of a dog that stood baring its glistening teeth at us just a few feet away. Cautiously, we edged out of the rotten doorway, careful not to make any sudden noises or movements that might encourage his inevitable attack. Scraping against the peeling wall, gaining splinters on the way, we attempted to keep hidden from the beast - but it was still stalking us, so we

ran. Clattering down the rotten steps, I screamed at Stephen to move; already he was in front of me.

Terror took over and converted into adrenaline, my body using every ounce of it as I pounded away from the giant black beast chasing us. Where had it come from? I wondered as I crunched down the gravel track at a speed that I never thought I could go.

*He was baring his teeth at them, the weird strangers. She's never seen him like this before, he's usually just Jack, but now he's a monster. He shoots after the strangers, chasing them away forever, like a dragon does. She sinks to the floor as she sees them run, clutches teddy even tighter, and cry.*

That night we spent in the freezing car was terrible. We huddled together on the rickety chairs, with an axe between us for safety just in case any unwanted strangers arrived. Unfortunately, sleep never greeted us that night.

The Sun rose, crackling through the tall pines and piercing our eyes. Inch by inch it edged up through the crystal sky. Thank goodness it was morning at last!

'Might as well try it again before we start walking,' Stephen said to me, exhausted.

He clambered into the driver's seat and doubtfully twisted the key. The engine spluttered into life. The thing, this piece of junk that had caused this whole situation, was working.

'I actually can't believe it,' I said, dumfounded.

'You're telling me.'

In utter amazement, we chugged down the dry, white gravel track, transformed by the dazzling sunlight, past the sinister haunting house. It looked a little less opposing in the sunlight than last night too - less daunting and ghostly. We honestly couldn't believe it had started again - after all that had happened! By that time, we were completely disorientated; we had nowhere to go. We carried on down the track, passing more and more identical trees, until we came across the highway. Sheer relief flooded through us as we hit the tarmac. Following the signs at around forty miles per hour to avoid another breakdown, we navigated our way to the nearest town. Finding a phone box was a challenge, but at last we borrowed one from the only shop in the 'town', and we hurriedly informed as many family members as possible of our adventures!

*Finally, it was morning, and her Daddy was back. Snuggled down in her warm cosy bed with Jack the hero by her feet, it seemed like a horrible dream. Her Daddy had come back a little later after they had gone, but he'd told her he hadn't seen them. When he had arrived, she had been sat crying with her back against the wall, with the nice and normal Jack stood over her.*

*Her father found her just sat there, shaking like a leaf from head to toe, evoking fear from every part of her tiny being. He knows now he never should have left her. But it was so rare that anybody ever*

*came round where they live - it is the middle of nowhere. That's why they lived there, so they didn't need to worry about anyone ever knowing. She had babbled out what had happened incoherently to him; he only vaguely deciphered that some scary strangers had come to the house, and tried to enter. Never mind, he thought; nothing bad had happened, she was safe now, just a little shaken, and their secret was safe once again. No-one ever needs to know.*

### Commentary

I based my narrative on a compelling real-life experience that my parents went through in which they found themselves stranded in the middle of nowhere in the heart of Canada. I found the story very suspenseful and unusual because of the unlikelihood of this ever happening to someone. I decided to write the story for people that enjoy mystery and action. People who enjoy reading suspense would appreciate this story, and I aimed to induce fear and confusion from the reader, to make them relate with the characters from both perspectives.

I chose to change perspectives in my story to make it more interesting and compelling and creating a sense of conflict, switching between the views of the two adults and the views of the little girl inside the house. Their situations are very different, yet their actions are both being controlled by the fear they have of each other, and the fear of the unknown.

Also, I changed the story of the original transcript slightly, as this added more depth, as more characters could be added. In the transcript, there was no evidence of there being a little girl inside the house; I added her in so that I could have more than one person's viewpoints in the story. Also, the transcript only suggested that 'something large and black [...] ran in front of us' but I took this information and changed this to the 'huge monster of a dog' that confronts the adults. This introduces another type of fear into the story, and the difficulties of indecision also. The final line of the story also makes it clear that the family have a secret to hide, that the story had hinted at throughout. This leaves the story on a 'cliff-hanger', and leaves the reader wondering always what that secret was,

I also decided to change from past to present in the story of my parents. This allowed me to convey how they felt about the situation then, and how they feel about it now; 'looking back now...' in the first paragraph portrays her feelings today, and also prepares the reader for the kind of story they are going to read.

When the story changes to present, I started in 'in medias res' ('then the phone rang...'). This takes the reader straight in to the action and gets their attention. It also allows more time to be spent on the main part of the story, instead of the history behind it, which isn't as interesting.

In the first draft of the story, there were lots of different first person speakers, which I found I understood, but not so to an 'outside' reader. I changed this by deleting speakers, and changing the little girl's narrative to third person.

Prior to writing this story, I looked into different style models of short stories, and the one that appealed to me most was 'in medias res/ as it enters straight in to the action immediately, which related to my genre of horror and suspense, as it grabs the readers attention immediately.