

The attic door  
creaked open



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Something rustled in the darkness. I stared, but could see nothing beyond the vague shapes of old suitcases and trunks piled high.

It smelt damp. I struggled up into the attic and wedged the door open. Light poured into the darkness. The darkness in the head of the house.

I balanced carefully upon the floor beams. I knew that if I stepped onto the plaster I could fall straight through into the room below. A cobweb brushed my face and I felt the sudden tickle of a spider crawl across my cheek. As I made my way forwards, it grew colder and darker. I was blocking the light from the attic door.

There were piles of old newspapers, brown paper bags tied with string, cardboard boxes and ancient, moth-eaten rugs that smelt of mothballs. Thick dust powdered every surface. I kept thinking that I would slip and put my foot through the floor. I stopped at a pile of old camping equipment. It was a jumble of guy ropes, torn canvas poles, wooden pegs, metal skewers and mallet. It was there that I saw the hand.

It was quite still – – – and white. At first I thought that it was marble. But then it moved. Maybe it was a trick of the light? I am frightened.

..... ' s understandable.

“ No, don't try and make up excuses, Jane” the voice in my head contradicted. I should have known that there is no point in trying to convince myself that it didn't happen. It was real. I took some agonisingly slow shuffles backwards, but not for one second taking my eyes off the inhuman hand. Groping through the darkness, my hand stumbled upon a rod.

As my grip tightened on the cold rusty metal, my mind raced. The raging furious wind outside forced the branches to scrape the window violently. With one swift movement, I hoisted the bar up over my head and hurled it towards the hand. As it came into contact, the hand disappeared under the mounds of camping gear and I heard a muffled yell.

As a figure emerged from beneath the rubble, I bound down the ageing wooden stairs. “ Jane, wait!! ” a deep echoing voice pleaded. I stopped at the foot of the stairs and relief washed over me like a mild rolling wave, as I identified the sound. Adam. Strong reassuring arms embraced my shoulders securely. Slowly, I turned to face the figure.

His loving searching eyes bored into mine. He winced in pain as I held his hand. I glanced down curiously and swallowed nervously. His fist was a vivid shade of purple, covered with a raw imprint of the rod. I smiled back apologetically. “ I am so sorry.

What the hell were you doing underneath there anyway? ” moaning impatiently. Adam rolled his eyes and sighed. “ Trying to sleep...

” Adam laughed sarcastically, “ What do you think I was doing? I was hiding from the police. When I heard footsteps, I was certain they had tracked me down and were searching this dump. Can you blame me now? ” His expression became serious. Leaning against the wall, he sank to the floor, with his head buried deep in his arms. The floorboards groaned under his weight.

I desperately wanted to crouch down next to him and hug him... reassure him that everything would be all right. But I couldn't.

As I closed my eyes, my mind flashed back, back to that terrifying night. I feel the cold rain beat against my cheeks and trickle down my back. I watch Sarah falling, arms waving frantically through the air in desperation, as she disappears over the towering cliff. I hear the deafening thud as head strikes the rocks of the riverbed, when her delicate neck snaps in an unnatural angle. I hug myself tightly as the nightmare plays over and over again like a never-ending film.

I tried to forget the horrible images but they kept coming back.....

. I can see her again. She lies there facing the night sky with her unblinking eyes wide open in horror, as the shallow, flowing water moves her wispy hair. I feel dizzy with repulsion and fear. Another unnecessary tragic loss.

But really, it was unavoidable. If she hadn't come between John and me, she would still be happy, still be on her balcony sketching the landscape, and still be alive. It was a cruel way, I admit. I had tried talking to her, even stooped down to such a level in desperation that I started threatening her. But it had to be done.

And there is no turning back time now. I glanced back at my brother, still crouching down with his head in his arms. I admired him for his courage. He had stood by me, unlike my friends, who all dismissed my feelings.

And now he was protecting me. I couldn't do it without him. Unexpectedly, the door swung open, creaking on its rusty hinges, and in the doorway stood...

Sarah! I choked out in surprise, " Sarah! Where... what..

. what are you doing here? " I blinked in disbelief. " I found out from Casey that you and Adam were here, and I was in the area so I thought I would make a cosy visit. What are you doing in this dump anyway? " she said smiling gently. " So.

.. your not dead? Weren't you at the picnic at the Point? " I mumbled, still in shock and confusion. " Dead? Far from it! Why would I be? No, I thought I told you I couldn't make it, I was stuck at home finishing some homework. " I thought hard.

Then if it wasn't Sarah I pushed off that night... Who was it?