

The Wendigo and the Girl

By John Davies

Daisy was your typical twenty year old tom boy. Boisterous, loud and outgoing, she was friends with pretty much everyone in the small little town in which she lived. Especially with Tom, Harry and Penny. The group of four were inseparable by any standards. And Daisy was always the ringleader whenever they got into trouble, which they always did. Tom had always been the cause, the little shithead he was, and Daisy always pushed him to do so with as much glee as she could muster. They had known each other since kindergarten. Harry was the youngest out of the group at only sixteen years of age, and had a clear crush on Daisy. Daisy was aware, but she was too busy fawning over Penny to care. That relationship between Daisy and Penny rocked the little conservative town they all called home. And for the first few months, it's anyone would talk about. Whenever the group would go on one of their monthly camping trips, everyone would talk about what the two girls would get up to. A total scandal. Ultimately it all died down, as things end to do. Within a year, everything went back to normal.

The four friends had a monthly get together that involved camping. The town in which they lived was surrounded by 400 square miles of Pine Barrens. The group would often hike into the forest and just stay there for several days. August 2017 was no different. All they had to do was decide where they had to go in the massive forest. The friends did what they always did and met up at the local park. "Why don't we do what we did last year and go to the creek," offered Tom. He enjoyed climbing up the walls, jokingly screaming as he did. "Nah, there's somewhere else I want to go. You guys ever hear of the Jersey Devil," Penny said with all seriousness, "because there is an abandoned house out there where the Devil is supposed to live." Daisy gave Penny a faint smile and responded with a "That sounds like a great idea. Let's do it." Tom didn't bother pushing his idea, as he knew Harry would do whatever Daisy wanted to do. It was almost pathetic.

Within days, the group was heading out to the abandoned house with all their gear. They would drive until they were as close as they could get with the truck, park it and then hike the rest of the way. In addition to their usual camping gear (two tents, cooking supplies and two hunting rifles and sleeping bags), they took a cooler with beer and their custom water canteens. They had a habit of refuelling from local water sources. Their journey took longer than any of them thought it would and Tom had even complained that the house didn't even exist before they got there. Even then, the sun was setting, so the group had to hurry to get the tents up.

After settling in, Daisy decided to get the beers out (they had more in the truck if they needed any) while Tom and Harry got a fire going. Penny had managed to bring her phone and a Bluetooth speaker and had some songs downloaded on her phone, though she had developed an obsession with an old British girl band called Girls Aloud, so chances are that the music wouldn't be played. Penny had also bought some food with her so it all worked out in the end. After the fire got strong and the music had annoyed everyone, they decided to tell some scary stories. "... and that's when Bigfoot attacked!" Tom shouted. Harry let out a dull moan,

seemingly bored at the story. “What, my stories ain’t good enough for ya,” Tom bellowed at the kid. “Yeah, something like that. Why do you keep telling the same story over and over again? Every time we go camping, you tell the exact same story.” It always seemed to everyone that Tom and Harry loved to complain to each other about each other. Tom responded with an overconfident “I personally enjoy telling the story.” “So, Penny, excited to explore the house tomorrow?” Daisy was trying to change the topic. “Yeah, it’s going to be fun,” came the cheery reply. Penny loved horror stories. Anything that went bump in the night piqued her interest. “If we encounter the Jersey Devil, I’m going to squeal with excitement,” came the mocking from Tom. Harry joined in with a “or maybe we’ll see Bigfoot” and both of them proceeded to laugh and joke over a few more beers, unaware of the presence watching them.

The following morning, the group woke up to an unsettling site. The two tents they were in were untouched, but there were footprints all over the place. Tom had followed the footprints from the left side of the house all around the tents and finally re-entering the forest at the right side of the abandoned building. The footprints looked like a person, but the toes of the prints seemed... disjointed, elongated. It spooked the hell out of everyone. “These are really creepy,” Harry finally aired out, “did any of hear anything last night?” “No, I didn’t hear anything at all,” was Penny’s answer. Daisy confirmed that with a quick “I didn’t hear anything either.” Tom didn’t respond immediately. Instead he seemed to have drifted off, staring coldly into the forest in front of him. Tom turned to him and caught his attention with a loud, sharp “TOM!” Tom turned around and looked at the others and said “I woke up last night. I heard that thing.” A look of confusion came over the others. That thing? “What do you mean you heard that thing,” Daisy asked with slight hesitation. Tom stared at her and said “whatever made those footprints. It walked around the camp, like it was looking for something. Then I heard a wolf in the distance and it ran off.” Tom had a concerned sound in his voice. Like he was scared. “It was probably just someone playing a trick on us. My brother probably got here after us...” Harry suggested before being shrugged off by Penny. “How would they get here though, your brother doesn’t drive and neither do any of his friends. Beside, who would be dumb enough to come all the way out here in the middle of the night.” Daisy for her part agreed with Tom, not wanting to believe the alternative.

After a silent thirty minutes where the group ate breakfast, Penny suggested they explore the house. That was, of course, they were here in the first place. “I don’t feel like it,” Tom sighed, never looking from his cup of coffee. Daisy could see a defeated look on his face. “How much sleep did you get last night,” Daisy asked. She could tell that whatever happened the previous night shook him deep. “Plenty, just... fine.” “Alright, I’ll go with you Penny, Harry, could you stay here with Tom please?” Daisy was always good at knowing what needed to be done. “Thanks, but I don’t need anyone to stay with me,” Tom replied. “I know, but I would feel better about it if there was someone here with you,” Daisy expressed with a quiet concern. Tom simply nodded with acceptance, and Harry sat next to his close friend. For all their arguing and shit talking, Daisy new that they were as close as two people could be. “Ok, let’s go Penny.” Penny simply responded with “Two girls in a dark abandoned house? What could possibly go wrong,” before a smirk appeared on her face.

The two guys looked on as both Penny and Daisy walked around the house. Surprisingly, the front door and ground door windows were all blocked up with sturdy boards. They had figured it would be easier to look around the house first before attempting to get in. Even

more surprisingly, the back door, or where the back door had once been, was wide open. The gaping hole led to what felt like an inescapable black void that was the interior of the house. It didn't faze either of the girls, as they both had flash lights with them. Turning them on, they both walked into the house. The first room they entered was an old kitchen. It looked like something you saw out of those old Victorian style kitchens. Strangely, beneath all the years of grime and dust, the entire room looked untouched. It gave off a spooky vibe, which both the girls loved. The creepier the better. "That's a lot of dirt," Penny added to a silent conversation between the two girls. "Yeah, don't touch anything," Daisy added. "Don't worry, I won't," came the response.

The two girls moved through the house, leaving the kitchen and passing through a hallway. On their right was a column of stairs leading up. On the left were two more doorways. The one closest to the kitchen turned out to be just a storage closet with nothing inside. The other door at the front of the house led to the living room. Like the kitchen itself, the living room looked as though it had been untouched since the Victorian age, with the addition of decades of dust and dirt. In the corner there seemed to be some old toys, like the sort you would give to children. Penny checked it out as Daisy stood at the door, uneasy about going inside. This house was making her uneasy and she wasn't sure why. "This place is starting to creep me out a little," Daisy said cautiously. She didn't want to appear too nervous in front of the clearly excited Penny, who merely responded with a sly "Scared already?"

Outside, Tom was looking a little worse for wear. He had started to wake up a bit more despite the lack of sleep he had the night prior, but that was most likely due to the three cups of coffee he had. "You feel like eating something Tom," Harry asked. He was, as he should've been, worried about his friend. Despite sharing a tent, Harry hadn't heard anything last night and certainly wasn't woken up by anything. "Yeah, sure. Why not," came the tired response via Tom, "You got any bacon?" Harry looked into the cooler bag they bought along with all their food for the next few days. He very quickly found the bacon. "Yeah, we got bacon. I'll put some on for both of us," Harry said. "Sound. Should we put some on for the girls?" Harry responded with "Nah, they'll sort themselves out soon enough."

Pretty soon the smell of bacon was in the air. It recognised the smell from a former life it could barely remember and also remembered that the smell belonged to food. Pretty soon it was on the move.

Penny and Daisy had left the downstairs and had now moved to the first floor of the house. There was a second set of stairs leading to another floor above them, but Daisy insisted on looking in the bedrooms first. Nothing sexual, but that odd feeling that something wrong kept bugging her. "If you want me in bed, you gotta find somewhere cleaner than this," joked Penny. Half distracted, Daisy simply responded "I thought you liked dirty?" Both girls cracked a smile as they reached the last room on the floor. The previous three rooms were all bedrooms. The last one had to be the bathroom, which both girls were eager to check out. Both girls wanted to know if there was anything interesting in there, considering the rest of the house. Opening the door, they were disappointed to find nothing. There was a mess all over the floor, with what looked like a toilet along the opposing side of the room. "Well, this is boring. There's nothing in here," sounded a very disappointed Daisy. "Well, there's another floor, why don't we check if there's anything interesting there?" Penny was being

optimistic, but she knew that there wasn't anything up there that would interest either one of them.

Going up the stairs led to an attic. It was a large space that was almost empty save for a strange pile of leaves in the middle of the floor. "Well that wasn't what I expected," Penny said, mildly confused about what she was seeing. The leaves were set out in such a way as to make a bed. What made it even creepier is that the usual dirt and grime that had been left untouched around the rest of the house had been clearly disturbed all around the mysterious pile. "What the actual fuck!" Both girls shouted this in unison. Any curiosity that they had disappeared almost instantly and they decided to get out of there. As they turned around, they heard a blood curdling scream that sound like it was a long way off. In a panic, they decided to run out of the house as quickly as possible.

NO! The spirits were louder than they had been in a while. So loud as to cause pain. It let out a scream. Yes, scream. That's all you're good for. The spirits were callous. But the hunger, the insatiable hunger, was too much. Still, it continued. Towards the smell. Towards home. Towards food.

As that scream violently penetrated the forest, jolting both the guys from their cooking. Tom stood up and faced, with no small amount shock, in the direction of the scream. Within moments, both Daisy and Penny ran out of the abandoned house, just as another blood curdling scream shattered through the forest. "WHAT THE HELL IS THAT," screamed Tom, the most panic stricken of them all. "Daisy, we should get out of here," Penny cried. Daisy looked around. Something was off, her Navajo blood was boiling. All she knew was that they needed to get out of there quickly. "Grab the rifles and what you can carry. Don't bother with the tents or cooler, they'll only slow us down," Daisy said in a commanding voice. No one spoke as they followed her lead. Harry and Daisy grabbed the two rifles they bought with them. Penny grabbed a rucksack and filled it with some of the food from the cooler. She didn't know what was going to happen, but she wanted to know that they would be OK if something happened. Keeping that in mind, she also grabbed the first aid kit that the group bought with them. Ten minutes later, the group was on the move. It would take them about three hours to get to the car. Tom had yet to calm down and Penny was trying her best to calm him down. Daisy was up front and Harry was at the back, both of them were carrying guns. They weren't that far from the car now, maybe 30 minutes. For the past hour, they had heard something following them and Tom had broken down several times and tried to flee into the forest. Daisy was sure that whatever it was had followed them from the camp, but was only now making its presence known. "How much further" Harry shouted from the back. "Not much," came the response from the front. Daisy wasn't sure what was chasing them, despite having hunted in these forests with her father for years. Before she could think anymore on what was chasing them, something jumped out of the bushes next to Tom and Penny. It was on top of Penny. Tom had flee'd into the forest, screaming in a panic. "WHAT THE HELL!!!," shouted Harry, trying to line up a shot. "NO, DON'T SHOOT! YOU'LL HIT PENNY," Daisy screamed back. She pulled out a hunting knife and fought the thing off. It skulked behind a tree as Daisy helped Penny up. Before Daisy could get a decent look, whatever it was ran off in the same direction as Tom. She instead looked at penny, who was clearly injured and covered in blood. "Harry, get Penny to the car, I'll get Tom." Harry didn't hesitate for a second and the pair rushed off to the car as Daisy ran after Tom.

It was hungry. It was hunting. It was hungry.

Tom kept running. He had to get away from it before it got to him. He wasn't thinking. He heard it chasing him, it was gaining on him. He couldn't scream or shout out for help. Maybe if he got back to the camp he could barricade himself into the house.

Daisy had a feeling that Tom was getting back to the house. Rushing back there, she was relieved to blindside Tom as they both reached the halfway point towards the house. "Tom, you're OK," Daisy smiled at the thought that her friend was safe. "I don't know where that thing is! It was chasing me, but I lost it at the river! We need to hurry before it comes back," Tom gasped, trying to breathe as he spoke. "Don't go into the house," screamed Daisy. She instinctively knew that the thing was in there, waiting for its prey. "But we have to, it's the only safe place here," Tom screamed. He was overcome with fear. "We need to get to the road, we need to get to the car," Daisy commanded with a false confidence. "What about that thing – we can't just..." Tom stuttered before Daisy cut him off. "We can't stay here otherwise that thing will get us. Penny and Harry are already at the car, we need to get there quick." Grabbing his arm, Daisy started running back to the car with Tom, who had a rather dumbfounded look on his face.

It had them. It were almost there. It had known. It's hunger was growing. It was following the one that ran. It had lost the one that ran when it crossed the flowing water. The hunger was driving it insane. It must eat. It was hungry.

Penny and Harry had gotten to the car with Penny getting into the drivers seat. "They need to hurry up," Penny said, finally calming down from all that was happening. "Yeah, but if they're not here soon, we going to have to go find help," Harry told her, worried more about his friends than he was about himself. Penny didn't say anything and just looked out the drivers side window.

Tom ran for his life, unsure of where he was going or whatever was chasing him. His legs moved on their own, giving confidence through the unyielding pushing that Daisy provided. Daisy herself was quietly scared of whatever was out there. She didn't say anything, though, as to not scare Tom into another panic. She was certain that they weren't far from the car, but had an awareness that it was around. They entered a little clearing and stopped.

It was there. It was in front of them. It was HUNGRY!

The slender grey mass jumped towards Tom. Daisy raised her gun and shot it mid-air. It was drivelling as it stared them down. For a moment, Daisy thought she saw something slightly human about it, before any trace of such humanity disappeared from view. It jumped again and Daisy shot it again. "RUN TOM!" Daisy demanded of Tom, who simply stood in fear and shock. His eyes were wide open, mouth gaping and it sounded like he was gasping for breath. The thing jumped again and knocked Daisy back about ten feet with a surprising amount of strength. Grabbing a hold of Tom, lifted him over its' shoulder and ran into the

thick forest. "TOM!" Daisy echoed into the void. She ran after him, not thinking about the consequences.

Harry and Penny had been waiting for so long that it had gotten dark. Penny decided it was smart to get help, so started driving off, much to the dismay of Harry, who wanted to get out and search. However, both were in a shock as just a mile up the road was Daisy, bloodied and clearly injured. She was just standing in the road. Stopping the car, both Harry and Penny jumped out to help their friend. Daisy was in clear shock, unable to speak and didn't even appear to be aware of her friends presence. "Daisy! Daisy," Penny tried to get her girlfriend to talk, but Daisy just stood there, silent. The that same blood curdling scream from before penetrated the air. "Get her in the car," Harry said. Harry decided he was going to drive seeing that Penny was too distracted to do so. As they climbed back into the car and drove off, they were unaware of the two sets of glowing eyes watching them from the dark forest....