

The Water Beast

The Second Story In the Eastgate Saga

The last time Blane and Lily went to their family's caravan for the school holidays it ended in a strange supernatural event to say the least! But they knew nobody would really believe them so they kept the truth to themselves and told everyone else that there was a freak electrical fault that destroyed their van. The long awaited approach of the Easter holidays saw them return to their once favourite holiday haven to confront their ghostly fears from last Halloween. Much to Blane and Lily's relief they would not be spending their holidays alone, this time Lily's younger sister Natalie-Jane or N.J. for short was also going with them. Blane was excited to return to Stanhope but did have some nagging anxieties from his most recent memory of this place. Lily was practically feeling the same, but was looking forward to some time off school, as she was a schoolteacher. NJ was glad to have a few days off from work she also loved going to the van for holidays and breaks.

The next morning after giving Lily a thrashing on Guitar Hero Blane suggested a walk to Stanhope inadvertently he needed the next issue of WWE weekly and Lily needed a loaf and some milk as NJ had drank it all again! It was a glorious sunny day, the perfect day for a walk. Coincidentally, it was also the perfect time for a walk, because NJ had woken up in a terrible mood, like the proverbial bear with a soar head. She had just shouted at Blane and Lily for making too much noise.

On their way to Stanhope, a brisk 6-mile trek there and back, they decided to take the back road. It was a much more quiet and scenic road, and the old sturdy trees provided a sort of canopy with their elongated, leafy, spring green branches, so they wouldn't get burnt or too hot from the blazing sun. The journey there didn't take that long, as Blane and Lily were nattering on and generally making fun of each other, Blane couldn't believe that they had already walked 3 miles. In Stanhope the sun was out in full force. So Lily decided to stop and treat Blane to a refreshing ice-lolly before they tackled the return expedition. Lily had a sweet strawberry cornetto.

On the way back, they decided to take a different route. It was the public footpath, the Weardale Way, which walkers and ramblers used often. Lily hadn't walked that way back to the van in years and it was the first time Blane had walked along that footpath too. The footpath wasn't really well kept, it was more like a rutty, old, dirt track that had been stamped on by hundreds of feet over the years so no grass tried to grow over it any longer. They were rather enjoying their leisurely walk back, as the sound of the river trickled by on their left and on the right they could see the aged and abandoned railway track. After they had hopped over a rather large wooden stile, they both stopped dead in their tracks.... They were almost half way back to the van as Blane could see the large weathered farmhouse up ahead, but blocking his view, was a herd of snorting, hungry, curious cows. They were the scariest sight he had seen in a long time. The cows were a mixture of all sizes, and colours. And they were all looking at the two strangers in their field.

All Blane said was "Oh God!" then looked at Lily with a scared white face.

"Don't worry, just keep walking, and don't look at them. They'll get bored and carry on eating the grass. Ok?" Encouraged Lily.

"Are you sure? They're looking at me!" whispered Blane still scared, and slightly hiding behind Lily.

"Yes. Come on loads of people walk through here all the time. So the cows will be used to seeing people." Replied Lily.

So, nervously Blane followed Lily but didn't take his eyes off the cows. Strangely, the cows were actually looking at Blane and even started to follow him. They knew this because Lily stopped walking and let Blane continue ahead alone. The Cows were definitely looking at him and following him! Lily was very amused and couldn't keep a straight face, she was practically rolling around the ground, while Blane was freaking out big style, but she also thought that the cows' behaviour was strange. But then again she thought Blane was a bit of a worry too.

"LILY!! STOP LAUGHING!!!! IT'S NOT FUNNY!!! WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE STUPID COWS?" Screamed Blane in a mixture of terror and annoyance.

"I don't know, maybe they think you look like a strange cow." Answered Lily.

"THAT'S NOT FUNNY LILY. LOOK THAT BIG BLACK ONE IS FOLLOWING ME. IT'S TALKING ABOUT ME!" Shrieked Blane again.

"Don't be so dramatic. Since when did you speak cowish? What did it moo?" laughed Lily again, this time she had a pain in her side from laughing.

"Yes I can! It was saying DINNER!"

Lily could barely contain herself. She stopped dead and laughed until her mascara was stinging her eyes because of the tears. But she soon stopped when the cow was almost face to face with her. Both her and Blane ran down to the river by their left to get away from the cow. Both Lily and Blane couldn't believe what they were witnessing the large black cow was actually still trying to follow them.

"Lily, this cow is crazy. Why is it following me?" panted Blane.

"I don't know. It must be the lynx effect from all that deodorant you sprayed this morning." she giggled.

Blane just rolled his eyes and shook his head. Then he stopped dead in his tracks and stared at his feet in disbelief.

"Lily am I standing in cow poo?" Blane asked quietly.

Lily just burst out laughing uncontrollably. When she decided to get a grip of herself she suggested that they try and cross the river at a shallow part to get away from the stalker cow. They only had to go a few mins up the path until they found place that looked safe enough to cross. Raised out of the river were some large smooth flat stones they could use as stepping stones. Cautiously Lily started to cross the river first. She told Blane to be careful as some of the stones weren't as firm as they appeared and wobbled when you stepped on them. However, her warning came a stone to late! Blane had already lost his balance and landed with a loud splash in the river. Luckily the river wasn't deep, so he wasn't in any danger. He didn't know what was worse that fact that Lily was trying not to see the funny side of his recent misfortune or the fact that he could have sworn the black cow was smirking at him on the other side of the river as well.

As Blane stood up out of the water he noticed something glinting like metal in the river. He picked it up and to his astonishment realised it was a long metal chain, but it hadn't rusted with being in the water. He was curious and terrible for collecting objects he finds, so he tried to gather up the chain to put with his collection. The chain was extremely long and the end of it appeared to be embedded in the riverbed. Stubbornly he pulled it as hard as he could and it eventually came free. His celebrations of superman strength stopped when he heard the loud sound of distance thunder, but the sound wasn't in the sky. It came from under the river and ground around them.

Lily didn't like the strange sound but said it could have come from the workers blasting the quarry. She also suggested that Blane leave the massive chain and get back to the van before they got sunburnt.

When they eventually made it back to the caravan, they were greeted with a grumpy NJ, who blasted them for being ages and missing their dinner. However she forgave the explorers and they had a great time the rest of the day. That night Lily was sleeping out in the sitting room on the camp bed, but she couldn't get to sleep, she loved to hear the soothing sound of the river trickling by, but she strangely couldn't hear it that night.

In the morning when they awoke the whole caravan sight seemed strange, almost too quiet, as if all of the life had been sucked out of it. As they stepped outside they realised that the whole river running through the caravan site had dried up. There was no water anywhere??? Just a few dead animals! What was even more strange was that the water supply to the entire caravan site was not functioning.

Everyone was puzzled by the events that were unfolding. People were whispering that all up and down the river animals and even some unfortunate people were dead, they had unexplainably drowned. But they were not near the river or water. Their deaths were suspicious. Lily couldn't shake the feeling that the river and the drownings are linked to the old chain Blane discovered in the river the previous day.

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