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Opening extract from

Devil You Know

Written by

Cathy MacPhail

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DEVIL YOU KNOW

CATHY MACPHAIL

KELPIESTEEN

FOR ROBERT, ROSS, DANIEL, ,REBEKAH,
JESSICA AND ISLA ROSE

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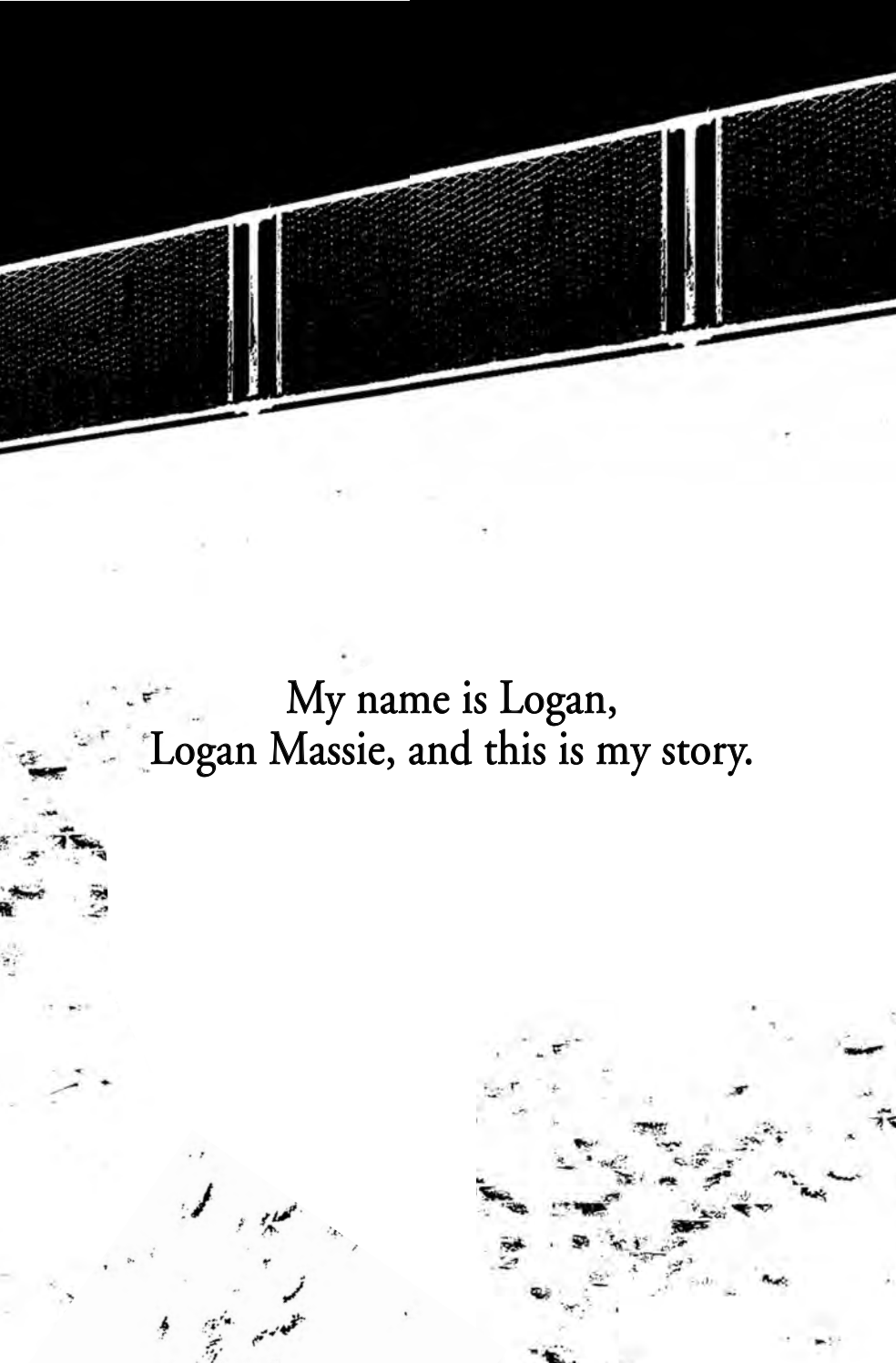
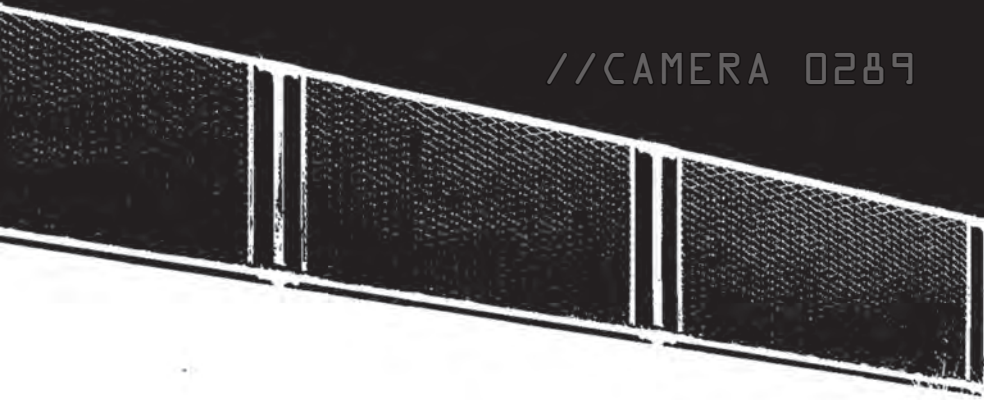


My name is Logan,
Logan Massie, and this is my story.



ONE

I'm telling it from the time it seemed to begin, for me anyway. A warm night in August. I stormed out of our flat in Glasgow, angry, frustrated after yet another argument with my mum.

Baz was waiting for me when I left the house. He was leaning on his elbows over the walkway, all dressed in black. His joggy trousers, his hoodie, even his trainers were black. He always dressed in black. I would joke with him that in the dark he would be invisible until he smiled. His teeth gleamed white against his tanned skin.

"I think you spend half your time under a sun lamp," I would say to him.

And he would laugh. “Spanish blood, my friend. My grandfather was a Catalan.”

I never knew if that was true. He was always making stuff up, seeing whether I’d believe it or not. I usually did.

I think I was the only one who was ever allowed to joke with him that way. He would never have taken it from anyone else.

Why were we friends? I often wondered – I always thought he was so cool, and cool was something no one would call me. We just seemed to click from the first time we met when I came here from Aberdeen.

He turned when he heard my feet pounding along the walkway. “You had another fight.” He nodded towards my flat. Had he heard my mum yelling at me, and me yelling back? Probably.

I nodded. “Sick of it,” I said. “All we ever seem to do nowadays is argue.”

“Lucky you’ve got a mum,” he said. “Mine dumped me. Took one look at my backside, thought it was my face and did a runner.” He always made a joke of it. But I don’t think he really felt it was funny at all.

Some old aunt and uncle had taken him in – his ‘Auntie Dorothy’, he called her. His uncle was always just his ‘Unc’. They seemed fond of him, he never had a bad word to say about them, but they didn’t give him any rules. He was able to go where he pleased, and could stay out as long as he wanted.

"Come on," he said, pulling me on.

"Where are we going?"

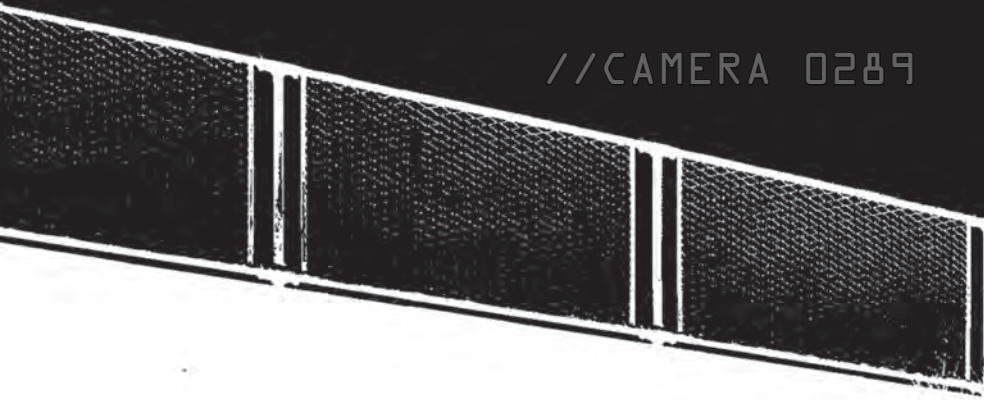
"See what's happening."

It felt good running through the streets of the estate with Baz. He was the same age as me, but a lot taller. He already had a reputation as a bit of a hard case, tough, scared of nothing, a bit dangerous. Some people even said he had something missing 'up here' and they would tap their heads. I'd seen them do it. Of course they only did that behind his back. They would never have said it to his face – or they would never have said it twice.

But Baz had only been a good friend to me since I came here to Glasgow. I hadn't wanted to come. I liked where we lived in Aberdeen. My life had always been there. I had friends there. It was my mum and her new boyfriend, Vince, that decided we should move, and to here of all places, to a three-storey block of flats in a sprawling, run-down estate. I'm not good at mixing anyway, but here I'd felt alone, out of place, like an alien in a strange new world, a small-town boy in the big city. I was called names because of my ginger hair, and my accent.

It didn't take me long to find out – the hard way – that words can mean different things in different places. The first time I called a boy a 'loon', he was ready to floor me. But that's what we call boys up there in Aberdeen. A boy is a loon, and a girl is a quine. This boy was not prepared to listen to that explanation. He was sure I had insulted

him. He had me by the throat, ready to do me serious damage. And then, Baz stepped in. The first time I'd met him. He told the boy to back off, and the boy did. He looked really scared of Baz, moving back at once as if he could see this was someone to be wary of. I realised then, this was the kind of boy I wanted as a friend. Everyone listened to him, seemed a bit afraid of him too. And since I had met Baz, no one had ever called me names.



TWO

I think Baz was as much of an outsider as I was. But at least he had a few friends. And his friends became mine. They were there waiting for us at the shopping precinct, sitting on a wall just outside the Turkish takeaway. Claude was there, and Gary, and Mickey. Mickey had his dog with him. He usually did have his dog with him. 'Ricky', he called it. That made me laugh the first time he told me.

"Your name is Mickey, and you called your dog Ricky? What were you thinking about?"

"I was only three when I got him! What did I know?" But he laughed too when he said it, used to people making fun of their names. How he loved that scabby

dog of his – it looked like a cross between a mangy werewolf and a ferret, but you would have thought it was a Royal Corgi the way Mickey treated it.

The boys stood up when they saw us coming. They weren't too sure about Baz, afraid of him maybe. At least that's what I always thought. Yet I think, like me, in spite of that fear, they wanted him as their friend.

"What's happening?" I asked.

"Nothing much," Claude answered. Claude Handley was overweight, that's what we said to his face. Behind his back we admitted he was just fat. 'He'd give a tub of lard a bad name,' Baz would say.

Claude couldn't talk without swearing. I suppose we all swore. Thought it was cool. But with Claude, every second word was a swear word. He even broke up words so he could swear, like, 'Nobody better call me over-$!!%in'-weight!'

So what he actually answered was, "Nothing $!!%in much," if you know what I mean.

I'm not using the swear words here, because I've been asked to write this down. I don't know who is going to read it. But when I'm writing down what Claude says, even sometimes what the rest of us say, you can remember to put in your own swear words.

"Anybody got any money?" Baz asked.

They all hesitated. I think they were worried Baz was going to ask them for some. We all knew he wasn't good at parting with his own money.

"Don't worry," I said, pulling out my pockets. "I'm skint as well."

Claude kicked the ground. "Always skint. Sick of that." (Remember, put in your own swearing.)

"Maybe we should get a job," Mickey suggested.

"A wee paper round," I said. "Something easy."

"Yeah, delivering papers up to a twenty-storey flat... with the lift broke," then Baz laughed and began to wheeze as if he was out of breath. "Haaa... been there... haaa... done that."

"We could wash cars," Claude said. "Charge a fiver each car. Wash, dry and polish."

"Boy scouts do it for nothing," Gary reminded us. "For charity."

Gary Balfour was definitely the good-looking one. A lock of brown hair always hung over his huge brown eyes, and when he flicked it back, girls swooned. We were always telling him he should audition for a boy band. He would walk it.

"But I can't sing," he would say.

"Neither can they," Baz had told him, and we all laughed.

Girls were always checking Gary out. I saw a couple of them right then, coming out of the takeaway, glancing over at him and giggling. Gary ignored them, and that seemed to make them like him all the more. Girls are funny that way. He held out a tenner to us. "Well boys, Gary to the rescue. My old man gave me this. And this."

He plucked at the collar of the leather jacket he was wearing. Gary was always in designer gear.

"Did it fall off the back of a lorry?" Baz asked. Most of the things Gary's dad got did fall off the back of a lorry. His dad was well known in the area as the man who could get you anything you wanted, cut price.

Gary stared at the ground for a moment. I think he would have snapped something back, if he hadn't remembered Baz, crazy Baz. Instead, his face broke into a grin. "Must have fell off the back of a Merc. My dad only gets the best."

They all laughed. So did I. I was glad to be friends with them. But I was sure they were only friends with me because of Baz. He'd been there first, a kind of leader, though they would never admit to that. Not to having a leader. We were a crowd of boys who were friends. Not a gang that needed a leader. Though there were plenty of gangs around here like that. I'd heard about them. But Baz was our leader, no doubt in my mind about that. I'd seen it. How Baz could make the boys do things, manipulate them. Make them think it was their idea in the first place. He was clever that way. What Baz wanted he usually got. Yet, they liked him, just as I did. When Baz was good, he was great. Funny, and always full of ideas for things to do.

Not that night though. After Gary had bought us all chips with his tenner, we had no money to go anywhere and we spent a boring couple of hours just hanging about

the shopping precinct, throwing chips for Mickey's dog. Not that he ate them of course. He'd drop them at our feet and wait for us to throw another one. According to Mickey, Ricky was very fussy about what he ate.

"He's used to chops and steak mince," he told us. "He's better fed than me."

That night, Ricky was our entertainment.

"Nothing ever happens in this dump," Claude complained when we were all ready to go home.

And I always look back and think that was the last time we could really say, 'Nothing ever happens'. What happened the next night sent a line of dominos crashing down that toppled into a nightmare.