

The Protectors of the Wood Adventure Series!

Based Protectors of the Wood on the Protectors of the Wood book series

Written by John KixMiller

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@protectorsofthewood

Join our story of misfit teenagers as they struggle to save the world from climate change.

Episode #140: Abby & Jeremy

Narrator: Back in her cottage, Abby took a cool shower and laid out clothes for her nighttime quest in the forest.

Abby: Let's see...all in black, including my black hoodie. It's not the weather for it, but I intend to be invisible. These stalkers are diligent, awake all night. And how can Jeremy and I carry all the fruits and vegetables we can pick tonight? I think there's one or two burlap bags in the tool shed. Yes! Got it. And now... I must have something around here left to eat. The heel of that delicious loaf of Penny's bread, the last scrapings of honey and nut butter, and two eggs. That's all! But later tonight I'll have fresh food for free! And now for some cool water and an hour of sleep. Set the alarm for 11:30, and finally some rest.

Narrator: But it was no good. She was way too excited to sleep. Her plan for the night stirred her up like a starving person imagining food, food for both body and soul. Having real company to hike through the forest at night and visit her garden! This was how she had bonded with Phoebe. Her energy bubbled over, and she began pacing the room. Finally, she got out her guitar and played a few melodies and experimented with songs that might work for her child care job.

Abby: Hmm, it's now 11:20. They might have bugged this place. No reason to set off an alarm and warn them I'm going out! I'll convince them I'm going to sleep. All lights and alarm off. Change to my black outfit. Study the view from my windows. The coast is clear.

Narrator: Abby slid out the back window with two old burlap bags under her arm. It was another dark night. The sliver of a moon was moving down into the west. She walked behind the apple trees to the privet hedge and crawled into the leaf pile. She had her route all planned out.

Abby: Okay. The iron gate. The worst danger point in my whole plan. Stay still, total silence for at least five minutes, maybe ten... There's the owl again, my best friend here in the churchyard. The birds will warn me of danger. Just listen, stay still... Oh... this is too much waiting, I'll take out the key, and ... whoa! That bird's warning call! What bird is that? I'll wait, lean against the wall. There it is: steps. They've stopped... started again... Shoes on leaves. They're gone. Oh my, it's not enough to keep watchers at the front gate 24/7. Now they've got to walk sentry duty. Why do they care so much? It must be that they don't have enough dirt to bury us. They want more.

Narrator: A fierce anger rose in Abby's breast. She unlocked the door, stepped out, and relocked it. There was no sound but the crickets of late summer. Like a shadow she crossed the path into the corn field. Nothing moved. Keeping watch on the path along the church wall, she walked almost silently between the rows of corn to Old Stone road. After another long wait, she crossed into the shadows of the trees along Marie Place, and then glided between the houses to Stable Lane and the soccer field behind the toy store and the coffee shop. Under the trees she arrived at the edge of main Street alongside the Phones and More store. There was little traffic and no pedestrians. She crossed to the trees on the other side, and now had a hidden path to the river. Already the dense forest had begun, where any stalker close enough to follow her would make blundering noises in the leaves, brambles, and branches, easily heard in the quiet night.

Abby: Ah, this is going well. There's the soothing sound of the river, and yes, already, there's the starlight on the water. I feel like I'm flying, or floating. Here we go... under Bridge Avenue along the water's edge. There! I've done it. The most difficult part of my escape is already over. These Morphy stalkers are hopelessly incompetent in this terrain. This game is not a part of their training. My walk to the Great Oak Tree is now through dense forest the whole way, and then I'll trick Jeremy, just to see how alert he is.

Narrator: Abby passed through the forest behind Glenda's cottage and the end of Oak Knoll Lane, and slowly approached the Great Oak Tree from behind. If Jeremy was there already, she wanted to surprise him. Her motivation was really an effort to impress him. She knew he took great pride in his outdoor skills, and was already in awe of her abilities, a new kind of artistry that set her apart from the girls he had probably known. She crouched behind a bank of mountain laurel with a view of the oak tree and the starlit field beyond.

Abby: There! Something moved. Yes. That's Jeremy's faint silhouette, appearing faintly in the starlight as he watches from his post behind the tree. Now I must move silently, but that is oh so hard to do. Slowly, slowly. Go ahead, crickets! Louder! Drown out my steps.

Narrator: She crept under cover of the crickets drone to within ten feet of Jeremy. Suddenly she stood up, and saw his body jerk in surprise. But to his credit, he didn't make a sound. Only the involuntary half an inch of flinching muscles gave him away.

Abby: Not bad, not bad at all.

Narrator: Jeremy took a few steps and whispered,

Jeremy: I thought you'd try something like that. I did my best to spot you. Nice going... This is so much fun. Where to now?

Narrator: Abby was thinking:

Abby: Oh I'm so glad he's not mad. To him it's a treat.

Narrator: Abby hugged him and whispered,

Abby: Follow me closely. Stop when I stop. Not fast, but very quiet and careful.

Narrator: They set off along a faint animal trail. Abby avoided the high ridge where their silhouettes could appear against the faint light, and took a slower path through the pine and fir trees. The branches hung low and often forced them to crawl. The needles were too sharp to brush the branches aside with bare hands. It was hard on the thigh muscles as they constantly had to crouch and duck their way along. But the bed of old needles was springy and silent. They moved with hardly a sound. Twice Abby stopped and listened for five or ten minutes. Jeremy waited. She could hear him breathing, not hard, but quite softly and regularly as they stood almost touching. They were alone in the forest, with the rustling and faint calls of the night animals for company. Their path climbed along rising ground and over the top of the long hill. And then the silvery glitter of the Half Moon River appeared before them. Moving quickly in their eagerness, they followed an easy trail to the water. Abby was thinking:

Abby: Stay slow... Okay, pull out the dinghy. Phoebe and I crossed the river... what? Eight days ago? The whole world has changed since then.

REACH FOR ME

Written By John KixMiller

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You know it's hard
Hard to keep going
When it hurts so much to live
You know it takes
So much more than
All you've got to give

Reach for me Reach for me
Cause I'm all out of strength
Today

Please show me the way
Please show me the way

I'll put one foot
After another
If you'll just keep me going
Give me hope
That it matters
And I'll follow the way you're showing

Reach for me reach for me
Cause I'm all out of strength
Today
Please show me the way
Please show me the way

Are you out there
Tell me are you in there
Does anyone hear my call?
It's got to mean
Got to mean somethin
That's anything here at all

Reach for me reach for me
Cause I'm all out of strength
Today
Please show me the way
Please show me the way