

THE PROTECTORS OF THE WOOD

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The Protectors of the Wood Podcast

The destruction of our planet is becoming real life.

Remember that everyone can make a difference and every action counts!

This podcast tells the story of misfit teenagers, struggling to band together and help our world through this crisis.

Episode #70: Across the Forest by Night

Narrator: Phoebe and Abby were silent, hiding in Abby's secret room in the basement of the haunted house. The men pursuing them had apparently given up and departed. The ghost dogs continued to bark, and patrol the area behind the house.

Abby (whispering): They may come back and search this place. Let's go while we have a chance. I'll grab a few things...

Narrator: Abby began rummaging around in the darkness. The pinpoint glow of a pen light appeared in her cupped hand, illuminating part of a shelf, an area framed like an altar by two white candles burned low. A notebook, a tiny green New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs, and a copy of Black Elk Speaks, sat there between the candles. Phoebe saw a few small stones, and other odd things like feathers and seeds and tiny bags. Just above the shelf were two sheets of paper, thumb-tacked to a piece of wood on the wall. In a quick glance she noticed The Call of Sophia written as a title at the top of one sheet of paper. With the blade of her knife Abby flicked out the tacks, folded the papers into the notebook, and slid it into a small backpack. Then she scooped up the books and the stones and dropped them in as well, and pulled the zipper closed. The light disappeared.

Abby: Follow me closely. Not a sound.

Narrator: They crawled over smooth dirt through a short tunnel. In a moment Phoebe saw the stars through the boards over her head.

Sound: Loud hum of crickets, owl hooting

Narrator: Abby squeezed through a small opening, and Phoebe followed her out onto the rotting wood. Ivy and morning glories grew around them and up over the collapsed porch. On all fours they crawled onto an open meadow, and then, rising to a crouching position, they ran toward the deep shadows of the forest. Phoebe speed-limped on Abby's heels as they ran down a gentle slope under the trees to the small stream. They crossed it, stepping on black rocks, and climbed a bank of dirt and loose stones. Abby led the way to a deer trail that ascended a low ridge thick with young maple trees, finally led to a large pile of stones glimmering in the moonlight. They sat quietly, listening.

Sound: very far away thunder, distant rumble, crickets, faint stream noise

Abby (very happy, elated): We did it! We're free! That was so cool. You were perfect.

Narrator: Abby's eyes gleamed with energy.

Phoebe: I'm scared, but I love it. This is fun.

Narrator: They smiled in the darkness, and listened some more. There was no hint of pursuit.

Abby: How's your cheek? That bruise is huge, bigger than the bandage.

Narrator: Abby reached over to Phoebe, and pulled a little of the medical tape.

Abby: Hmm... Sammy's butterfly strips are holding. The cut's starting to heal.

Phoebe: I don't even notice it. But I'm starving.

Abby: Let's go a little further, and then I've got a treat for us.

Phoebe: Oh... great. But where are we going? What comes next?

Abby: They might watch the bridge, so we're taking the forest route to your house. I'm not taking any chances. It's all set up for tomorrow.

Phoebe: But then what?

Abby: It'll be sort of like today, but more dramatic. The emergency will be much bigger, and Tuck will have to get involved.

Narrator: Phoebe waited for more, but Abby seemed to think that was enough information.

Phoebe: Abby! You've got to do better than that!

Abby: Shhh... Your voice carries. Talk soft.

Phoebe (whispering): Okay, you're right, I'm sorry. But how will I know what to do?

Abby: People will hunt for me at the abandoned house, just like today, but more of them. Your job is to bring Tuck, and we'll escape like tonight, and I'll move into the churchyard cottage.

Phoebe: We've already had an emergency! Let's go to the church now.

Abby: I wish we could, but Tuck is going to need something pretty powerful to move me into that cottage. Think about it. I've got a bad reputation. Me and my family – our people – have been treated like demons and sub-humans for generation after generation. You don't know the half of it.

Phoebe (hesitant): My father... he told me about... the fire, long ago.

Abby: That's right. They burned the old Hidden Valley village – all of it, from the mansion to the cabins – eighty years ago. My great grandfather was in it. We're still running scared, and they joke about it! You heard them. It'll take something new and dramatic to really change all this. They've got to come after me in the open, and then Tuck and others will get involved. People will care about me! They'll see what it's like to *be* me!

Narrator: Phoebe was far from satisfied.

Phoebe: I still don't get this flying thing. Even if it works, what good does it do you?

Abby (losing patience): I've told you more than any other soul on earth. But never bring it up. Forget I ever said it.

Phoebe: Oh... all right...

Abby: For now, we've got to get back and get some sleep. Tomorrow's the day. Come on.

Narrator: Abby led the way along a wall – really just a long pile of stones that went on and on in the strange silvery world that had begun to feel familiar. Phoebe wondered if Abby intended to come back to Penny's house to sleep. That would be an awkward situation. But no matter. Every normal concern seemed petty next to the problems at hand.

Sound: footsteps, gravel, leaves, bushes

Narrator: As they went downhill through a glade of enormous old maple trees, the wall ended. A coolness and smell in the air told her that the river was ahead. The noise of her footsteps tramping through the leaves seemed very loud in the forest night, but Phoebe supposed there would be no one to hear it, except the animals who hopefully would get out of the way. Suddenly

she saw a different kind of darkness – smooth and level – down through the trees. At least two sets of small gleaming eyes looked and disappeared. She heard the plopping noise of animals entering the water.

Sound: Major river sounds continuing for the rest of the episode

Narrator: Suddenly Phoebe's foot slipped in the layers of leaves, and her knee gave way with a stabbing pain. Down she went, sliding into a giant old tree on the riverbank. The thick roots gave her a rough bruise in the ribs, but it was her knee that worried her. Abby was there pulling her up by the hands.

Abby: Are you okay? Please say you're okay!

Phoebe: I think I'm all right...

Narrator: She stood, and put some weight on the knee.

Phoebe: I'm okay. Just my knee again. Let's go.

Narrator: Abby threw her arms around her, and just as suddenly released her.

Phoebe: I'm really okay.

Narrator: But Phoebe knew it wasn't true. The knee was now wobbly, unstable. She wondered how long it would hold up with this bad footing in the darkness. Abby led the way along the riverbank to an enormous fallen tree, its roots upended, its branches sprawling up the hill. From the ground next to the lower trunk she pulled aside a number of loose branches. There in the space created by the giant roots elevating the trunk was a very small boat, a wooden dinghy lying bottom up in this concealed nest under the fallen tree. Abby pulled the boat out onto the bank, and turned it over. Returning to the tree, she grabbed a long pole and a wooden plank and put them in the boat.

Abby: Help me lift it over these stones.

Narrator: In a moment the boat was in the water and she was holding it against the current.

Abby: Jump in!

Narrator: Phoebe stepped in and sat on the tiny wooden seat near the bow. Abby handed her the flat piece of wood, stepped into the stern, and pushed off with the pole. The boat floated into the river and turned with the current.

Abby: Paddle on the right side! Paddle!

Narrator: Phoebe dipped the plank into the water and pulled, and pulled again, and again, feeling a sharp pain jabbing in her ribs. The boat turned toward the opposite bank. Abby was pushing with the pole off the river bottom. The boat picked up speed, moving downstream at an angle. The water shimmered in the moonlight. The sky opened up above them, and then in what seemed such a brief moment, the boat ran aground on the other side.

Abby: Grab that branch!

Narrator: Phoebe held on as the boat twisted in the current, and pulled the boat ashore. They climbed onto the bank, dragged the boat after them, and then sat for a moment looking at the water. Phoebe realized that her pain was within the bearable level. Nothing too terrible had gone wrong with her body. Her knee throbbed, her muscles were bruised, her upper cheek was swollen and narrowing the vision from her right eye. But none of these problems would interfere with the things she wanted to do.

Phoebe: Wow... I liked that. Where'd you get that boat?

Abby: It was washed up on the bank a couple of rains ago. The best boat I've had.

Phoebe: This is fun.

Abby: I wish we could leave the boat under these vines, but I'm guessing the water's going to rise tomorrow. A lot. So we've got to carry it up a ways.

Narrator: But neither of them moved. The view before them seemed so spectacular, with the moon and stars above and the moon and stars reflected in the water. It seemed just like life, the immensity outside and the immensity inside. There was something so hypnotic and caressing about the dark and silvery water gleaming by, something so nourishing about the strange light, as if it were a kind of food with vitamins essential to life that you could rarely find; and so when you did find it, you had to take out the time to fill up on it.

Abby: Hmm... I've got some treats.

Narrator: She took a bottle from her backpack and took a swallow.

Abby: Want some? Breakfast Mixture. I saved it from the coffee shop.

Phoebe: Sure...

Narrator: Phoebe poured the lukewarm drink down her throat, tasting of chocolate and peppermint. A bit of extra energy made her feel more alert.

Phoebe: What a good idea.

Abby: I knew we'd need it. And I grabbed something else from my hide-out.

Phoebe: Oh man, I can't get over it, this is so awesome! Have you been here before, just to sit and watch the water?

Abby: Lots of times. I used to fish here during high school to get away from it all, or just read or relax and do nothing.

Phoebe: But where were you living?

Abby: Where we just were. My basement room. My hide-out.

Phoebe: But what about your parents?

Abby: They were back at the house in Ridgewood, near the other side of the forest.

Phoebe: But then... what were you doing going to school over here?

Abby: Ridgewood is just like Middletown, with no high school. We got bused here.

Phoebe: But why live in your hide-out?

Abby: I didn't go home sometimes. I couldn't stand it. My parents and I were arguing.

Phoebe: About what?... You know... I can ask you questions all day. I'm sorry, I must be really annoying.

Abby: No... It's just that I'm so interesting, and both our worlds are getting bigger. And to answer your question, we argued about Wendy. I used to go see her all the time, and they thought it was bad for me. But she's my godmother, and I just went and saw her anyway.

Phoebe: But... why... what was wrong with seeing her? I know Wendy. She's... she's... one of the best people I ever met. She cured my childhood illnesses, and knew about all sorts of things no one else knows.

Abby: Yes! That's how I feel. But my parents wanted me to adjust to Ridgewood, but I didn't like it. I grew up in Rivergate, and my childhood friends were there. Ridgewood, and even Half Moon High School, were like living in exile... And another thing, Wendy keeps saying I have a mission out in the big world. She treats me special, and I can't forget it.

Narrator: They stared at the river some more. The bottle was empty.

Phoebe: I saw you with your boyfriend at the first concert.

Abby: I know. You came in through the back.

Phoebe: That's Marcus, right? He was there tonight.

Abby: Yup. He's a really nice guy. But it all turned into a disaster. Too dangerous for both of us. Like Romeo and Juliet. I wish we could be friends... I knew being sort of like married would never work. We had to break up, and he was very hurt. He has a hard life. His family treats him bad. If only I could make it right, but I don't know how... (pause) By the way... you like Jeremy, don't you?

Phoebe: I do... very much. I think about him all the time. But I'm confused.

Abby: We're all confused. If you figure something out, let me know. I'm not sure who I like at this point.

Phoebe: You like George.

Abby: I like lots of people, and I like George. You do too.

Phoebe: We decided to be like brother and sister. And I like you very much...

Abby: I'm glad. Isn't this fun, being ourselves.

Phoebe: If only it could happen more often...

Abby: Do you see why I need a place in Middletown? Not next year, but now? I have a life. It's mine. I'll fight for it.

Narrator: Phoebe felt a sob well up inside of her, and spill out with a faint cry.

Phoebe: Ahh... I'm afraid.

Abby: Me too.

HEART IN MY HAND

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F D-
I had a friend a while ago

Bflat F
Had no reason to fear her
C D-
And she gave me a picture of a bright blue boy
A- Bb
And she gave me an oval mirror
A- Bb
Don't you know, I was sorry
F Bb
To see her go, Baby oh no

But oh, oh, if you want me so
I'll be there for you
Just ask me to play and I'll know what to say
If you come round today
You won't be in my way
Oh no, baby not you

And oh, oh, there are questions I know
But I don't care no more
Why don't we just dive in the stream
And find our sweet way
Down a warm and red dream
Mmmm, mmmm

F D-
And I'm runnin around without an eye in my head but
A- Bb
My heart's course is set
A- Bb F
And my old dreams are now let... letting me go
C D-
Just what I'm after's DM unclear to me
A- Bb
Can't really say that I know
C D-
Just what's comin ain't easy to see
A- Bb
When we're all gettin ready to go
A- Bb

And the bubble we're in it just grows

F

Bb

And grows and grows, grows and grows

I'll say so long to myself again

See me if you can

You know I might go out to sea this time

I might roam on the land

But I'll carry my heart

In my hand, mmm, in my hand