

**THE
LUCY WILSON
MYSTERIES**



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The Lucy Wilson Mysteries

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For a short while Lucy Wilson thought that the protests erupting everywhere were just an excuse for people to get out on the streets. They had lockdown fever and were willing to support any cause that came with fresh air and lots of people.

Lucy missed people.

Initially Mum and Dad didn't want her to watch the video that sparked the unrest. But Lucy felt it was important to check it out. Nobody deserved to be brutalised because of their skin colour, did they? She didn't really know any police beyond Hobo's mum, but she wasn't blind to the many videos on social media that showed horrific acts of violence against BAME people.

Lucy looked down at her arms. Nobody in her life made a fuss about her colour; not her friends, her family, or even the good people of the not-so-boring Ogmores-by-Sea.

That didn't mean she didn't experience racism or prejudice. She just didn't receive it from people that mattered to her, and she'd learned to accept the occasional hurtful acts and slurs was just how things were.

Well, she'd used to accept that, and then, despite

her parent's warning, she'd watched George Floyd's video, and her entire outlook on racism changed. She'd faced plenty of monsters, but nothing could compare to the casually cruel way in which this man's life had been ended. His pleas to breathe, his pleas for his mum, and his pleas for his very life burned into Lucy's soul. She now understood why people would risk their lives to protest his death and she felt duty-bound to join them.

Her eyes darted between her laptop and the art and crafts supplies that her dad had bought for her homeschooling. She didn't need to call Hobo on Whoosh again. She was certain he would show. Grabbing her poster board and markers, she sat down cross-legged in the middle of the floor and scrawled BLACK LIVES MATTER in big blockish letters.

Tears sprung to her eyes as she ran her fingers over the words. Such a simple saying that held so much rage and pain. She could still hear the gathering crowd, begging for mercy, and she struggled to understand how one human being could inflict so much pain on another human with such casual disdain.

A fat tear dropped onto the board and soaked into the black ink. Lucy quickly scrubbed the rest of her tears away. She had faced monsters, evil aliens, doppelgängers, even psychotic Clowns, and she had never cried, but after watching one video she couldn't stop blubbering all over the place.

Lucy rounded the corner and raced across the street to the park where Hobo had agreed to meet her. She had chosen that spot because it was a few streets away from the protest, which meant they wouldn't miss each other in the crowds and could prepare themselves before they charged in.

A few minutes passed and Lucy began to fear that Hobo wouldn't show. He'd had a worried look about him when she'd spoken to him on Whoosh earlier that day. His eyes were dim and reserved. His mum was a good officer and maybe he viewed the protest as a sort of betrayal. Lucy's stomach started to churn at the thought. She bounced on the balls of her feet and checked the time on her phone repeatedly, while resisting the urge to pace the length of the street.

'Come on, Hobo,' she muttered quietly. 'This is

a bit too heavy to face alone.'

She was about to start heading to the protest when she saw his bald head walking quickly towards her.

Relief washed over Lucy like summer rain.

'I thought you weren't going to come.'

Hobo eyes bulged over his shark face mask. 'I wasn't going to. This isn't like the other protests we've been to, Luce. Mum says it's far too dangerous.'

Lucy dug in her pocket and pulled out a small bottle. 'I've got on my hand sanitiser, my mask is on, and I'm going to stay two metres away from everybody.'

'The pandemic is bad enough, but I'm talking about the protest itself. Mum said there are some real bad elements in the crowd.'

Shouts erupted from Lucy's jeans, causing both her and Hobo to jump in surprise.

She dug her phone back out. 'The hand sanitiser must have knocked it on.'

'Well, hold it up, so I can see what the fuss is about.'

She did so and angled it so they could both see

the screen. A group of protesters in Bristol were trying to topple the Edward Colston statue.

‘You see, Mum was right. They have no business tearing down public property like that.’

‘Maybe, but he couldn’t have been a good man to attract that kind of action.’

As if on cue, Lucy noticed something; the crystal in the ring that she wore on a string around her neck was glowing.

‘I guess we’re just about to find out.’

She grabbed Hobo’s hand and they both started to fade away.

Hobo stared at his shoes sinking in the mud. His jaw dropped open as he took in their surroundings. The afternoon sun was replaced by angry storm clouds. A foul stench punched through his face mask. Straw laced with horse manure was scattered across an alleyway between two crude log cabins. ‘Where have you taken us, Lucy?’

‘*When* is a better question,’ she said, crouching down to peer inside a gaping hole in the log. She moved to the side and waved Hobo over.

Dozens of African men and women were herded

into the room, shackled from their necks to their ankles. They were followed by half as many children.

Hobo squeezed his eyes shut and dropped his voice to a whisper. 'Tell me this isn't what I think it is. Why would the ring bring us here?'

Lucy looked on in shock, willing herself not to cry.

'Lucy, look at them. They've all got RAC branded on their chest.'

'That's horrible. It's inhuman!'

Screams broke out from the cabin, snatching both Lucy's and Hobo's attention. They were coming from a small girl being torn from her mother's leg. They couldn't understand the language the girl spoke, but they could feel her pain. Lucy had to bite her bottom lip and cover her mouth to keep from hollering out.

Hobo pushed away from the cabin hole and looked around nervously. 'It's genuinely horrible, but we can't be here, Lucy. It's not safe.'

'Can't we do something? Look at that poor girl.'

'No, we mustn't change the past. It's already written. You know that as well as me.'

Lucy stood up, dusted her jeans off and sighed.

‘Sometimes the past is unfair.’

A horse-drawn carriage pulled up next to the building. The driver, a very round man with a ridiculously long moustache, leaned forward, pushed his hat back, and squinted at Hobo and Lucy.

‘Hey, what are you two doing back there? And what in the blazes are you wearing?’

A long-forgotten memory pushed its way forward into Lucy’s mind. It was a memory that she’d rather continue to forget, but somehow she knew she was just about to revisit it.

‘Time to go,’ Lucy said, grabbing Hobo’s hand. Once again, they both faded away.

Something cold and wet brushed against Hobo’s face. He yelped and struck out with his arms, wildly engaging in a heated battle with a garden hose.

Lucy grabbed his arms, laughing. She gave him a firm shake. ‘Open your eyes, Hobo, you’ve won. The hose has surrendered.’

Hobo shrugged Lucy’s arm off of him, smiled down at the hose tangled at his feet and gave it a swift kick for good measure.

‘Where are we?’ he asked.

'Florida, 2010. Dad took us all to Disney World.'

'But this isn't Disney World. It looks like someone's house.'

'It is,' Lucy said. She appeared to be looking around for someone.

Colourful decorations were splattered about, and there was a big table on the far end, filled with presents and a gigantic cake. Small family groups were gathered here and there, by the grill, on the deck, and beside the pool.

Hobo smiled at a little boy sneaking treats off a picnic table. 'Man after my own heart,' he said, nodding approvingly to the petty theft in progress.

Lucy's dad, Albert Wilson, emerged from the house carrying a gift. His face was bright red and looked painful.

'Mum warned Dad to put some sunscreen on, but he wouldn't listen,' Lucy said, smiling. She groaned when her five-year-old self came bursting out of the door behind her dad.

Little Lucy wore a green *Princess and the Frog* bathing suit, with bright orange arm bands on both of her arms.

'Cannonball!' cried little Lucy as she ran and

jumped into the centre of the pool.

‘Look how adorable you are, Lucy, so festive in your neon sandals.’

‘Be quiet or I’ll set the garden hose on you again.’

Hobo looked down at the hose at his feet. ‘I beg your pardon. I won that fight fair and square. The stupid hose didn’t stand a chance.’

Lucy’s face changed as she watched some of the parents pull their children out of the water.

Mr Wilson was in a heated argument with some of the parents, but Hobo couldn’t make out what they were saying.

The volume escalated and soon little Lucy was the only person left in the pool.

Hobo’s heart broke as he watched the confusion and fear on little Lucy’s face.

‘Come on, Lucy,’ Mr Wilson called, walking over to the edge of the pool. ‘We’re leaving.’

They watched quietly as young Lucy paddled over to her father.

‘Did I do something wrong, Daddy?’

‘No, sweetheart, you did nothing wrong at all,’ he said, scooping her up out of the pool.

'Who are these people?' Hobo whispered to teenage Lucy.

'Dad set up a business meeting with one of his American clients, but he didn't tell Mum. She was furious.'

'I bet she was.'

'And to make matters worse he got himself invited to this party. Mum refused to come. She went to Epcot instead with Nicky.'

'And Conall?'

'Oh, he had some actual lawyering work to do with his lecturer, helped out with cases over the summer, so he never came with us. Got into a proper row with Dad about it.'

Mr Wilson walked towards the house to get a towel for little Lucy.

One of the parents followed behind him. 'You don't really expect our children to splash around with a dirty little monkey, do you?'

Mr Wilson's face hardened with rage. He turned around and took a few steps toward the man, but little Lucy's little arms tightened around his neck.

'It's all right, baby girl.' He cuddled little Lucy and continued to dry her, ignoring the evil

comments being thrown at them.

‘I’m not dirty, Daddy. Mum helped me get washed up and dressed for the party.’

‘I know, sweetheart, you are not dirty, and you are definitely not a monkey.’

Hobo watched as Mr Wilson’s client herded some of the more hateful parents towards the house.

‘Why is everyone so mad with me?’ asked little Lucy.

Mr Wilson wrapped the towel around her. ‘Some of these people are quite mad, but it has absolutely nothing to do with you.’ He held her close and kissed her cheek. ‘They fear and hate people whose skin is a different colour.’

Little Lucy looked down at her arms. ‘But I’m the same colour as Mum.’

‘Yes, you are, and you are both incredibly beautiful to me.’

Hobo saw the tears and the sadness in her little eyes as Mr Wilson carried her from the party.

One of the little white children tried to jump back into the pool, but his mother snatched him back. ‘You’re going to have to wait until it’s cleaned out, honey. The pool is dirty now.’

And, just like that, the world changed around Hobo.

Eight minutes and forty-six seconds after they had first disappeared, Hobo lifted his hand to his forehead to shade his eyes from the sun. They were back at their meeting place in the park. Lucy was staring at her phone. The protesters in Bristol had toppled Colston's statue and had dumped it into the river.

Footage of similar statues being taken down all over the UK and America flashed across her screen.

Lucy put the phone away and turned towards Hobo.

'You and me, Hobo, we fight injustice every day, but alien invasions are easy compared to this. Prejudice is invisible.'

'I *do* know, Lucy. Having alopecia sets me apart as well.'

'Yes, and you've been bullied. And it's horrible. But you haven't been followed around a department store because of the colour of your skin. You haven't been stopped on the street by the police for wearing a rucksack.'

‘No. I haven’t. You’re right.’

‘I remember Grandad once said that sometimes human beings are worse than the monsters.’

Hobo picked up Lucy’s sign. ‘Well, let’s do something about it.’

The Ogmores-by-Sea protest was peaceful, and everyone wore masks and stood two metres apart.

Afterwards, Lucy and Hobo watched clips of similar protests all around the world.

‘Black lives do matter,’ Hobo said, and Lucy nodded.

They both took solace in the fact that the entire world was beginning to agree.

About the Author

Julia Press Simmons is the CEO of QMB Publishing, Amerime Media LLC and Sticky Situations.

She is the critically acclaimed author of more than twenty books including *The Strawberry Mansion* and *Fornication* series.

She is an award-winning spoken word artist, and playwright. Her play *Down There* was selected by the Shades of Black Festival Emerging Playwright's Series in Nashville, Tenn. *Down There* also received a staged reading by the African American Playwriting Exchange in New York City.

She lives in Pennsylvania with her family.



THE LUCY WILSON MYSTERIES

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