

## Burying Your Brother in the Pavement

by Jack Thorne

**TOM:**

We used to have this game we played when we were kids - we'd both be superheroes. I'd be Hero Man, and he'd be Skill Man. We weren't very good with names. And Courtney was the baddie, Super Bitch - though she didn't know she was the baddie, because Courtney wouldn't be caught dead playing stupid games with stupid little kids. Plus, she'd have killed us for calling her Super Bitch. So we used to pretend she knew and hide from her and beat each other up. I mean, really, that was sort of the reason for all of it, a quick game of hide 'n' seek and then a bundle - which generally meant hitting each other. It was good.

I still remember the first time I knew he didn't want me around. The year I skipped was year four. I moved up from the end of year three to the beginning of year five. Anyway, so I was brought in to meet the class, like I was a new kid, though they all knew me because I was Luke's brother from the year below.

And... and... Luke was sitting by someone else - Ben or someone - and shot me this look. Half a smile and half a not and half a please-don't-sit-by-me-please-don't-sit-by-me. And then he looked away and never looked up. And it sounds stupid now, but you're nine, I mean that was one of the first times I'd figured out that not everyone would like me. You know how you think that? When you're a kid, you think, everyone likes me, of course they do, why wouldn't they? I'm great. And then you get older and you realise, no one likes me, of course they don't, why would they? I'm horrible. Anyway, Luke - that look in Luke's eyes - and then looking away - I knew he'd hate to sit by me... so I sat in the spare seat - beside Martin.

You see, my brother was probably the nicest guy anyone knew - if you'd known him you'd have thought the same - I mean, everyone - *everyone* - thought he was nice and everyone would say it. Nice Luke. Not that he was that nice, just everyone thought he was. Me, I knew him as he really was.