

SAVITA KALHAN



THE LONG
WEEKEND

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The Long Weekend

"The Long Weekend is a gripping and horrifyingly realistic novel which is hard to put down."

Niamh Donnelly (13), Latymer School, London

"The Long Weekend is a thriller which draws you in and keeps you on the edge of your seat."

Alice Donnelly a.k.a. Alice Somers (14), The High School, Dublin

"Once I started reading, the book and I were inseparable. The book holds the reader to the extent you can't move until it is finished. The book shows us that there are still weird people and that it is of the utmost importance children of all ages know the types of people that can be out there. The book is better than brilliant and it is so powerful because these things can really happen."

Dominic Page (14), St. John's School, Surrey

"The Long Weekend is such a thrilling and well-written book that I was unable to put it down. If I were to describe it in one word, it would be 'gripping'. The book captures the consequences of child abuse and raises awareness of such crimes, as well as providing a solid storyline. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in a captivating and modern read."

Harry Cain (12), The Skinners' School, Tunbridge Wells

"Throughout the whole book there was never a lack of drama or thrill. It had me itching to find out what happens next. The book has plenty of suspense and a lot of surprises. It really conjured up a picture in my mind and expresses the situation that all parents and children fear. The quote that really drew my attention was, 'Isn't this your car we're riding in?' This quote is the real beginning of all the action and drama. It has the sudden terror of realisation that they are in trouble. All in all a gripping novel and highly recommended."

Arthur Bolotovskiy (14), Finchley Catholic High School, London

"I loved this book! It had me shivering with fright because it made me realise how easy it is to fall into a trap like that. It was scarily realistic!"

Grace Woolford (12), St. Michaels Grammar School, London

"I couldn't put The Long Weekend down. It is one in a million. This book made my previous favourite book look dull and boring. It sent a chill down my back. TOTALLY LEGEND!"

Laura-Suzanne Olsen (13), New Hall School, Chelmsford

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WEEKEND**

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SAVITA KALHAN 



**THE LONG
WEEKEND**

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For Taghreed, without whom it would never have started.

*And for Hish and Jad, without whom it would never have
continued.*



It's tough being the new kid, but when you're not the only one it's not so bad. The problem was Sam was always the new kid and always the only one. He'd moved schools four times and moved countries three times – and he was only eleven. That had to be a bit of a record. He should write to the *Guinness Book of World Records* and get them to enter it as a new category. He'd be famous. Not that he wanted to be famous, but it would have been a pretty cool thing to tell people.

Sam slumped into his chair, and unloaded his brand new school regulation rucksack. He wondered why they had to carry the great hulking thing when it only contained a couple of books and some worksheets at any one time. Still, at least it was Friday and he had the whole weekend in front of him, and better still, he was going over to Lloyd's. Yes, Sam had made a friend – Lloyd, who just happened to be the coolest kid in the class. He was into everything Sam was into – football, tennis, swimming, running. Oh, apart from rugby that is, which Sam couldn't get his head around, yet.

The morning passed in a blur, much like the rest of the week had, except that he'd only got lost once, which was a new personal best as he had been averaging five times – ten if you counted afternoons too! Although the credit had to go to Lloyd, who had stuck around with him – and who had a much better sense of direction than he had!

He followed Lloyd into Mandela Hall and checked out the lunch menu. It was the usual stuff that every school Sam

had ever been to served up on a Friday: fish in some shape or form (and this must have been a good school because the fish was battered fillets and not star shaped, or fish shaped, or finger shaped, or guess-the-shape!), and chips and beans, or the 'healthy option' of baked potato and salad. Sam guessed that maybe Jamie Oliver or some other trendy chef had been in and done his thing. Lloyd scoffed the lot without wasting any time and he was on to seconds before Sam had got through his first helping.

'Get a move on, Sam. We've got a game lined up,' Lloyd said through a mouthful of treacle pudding. 'If it tips it down, we'll get told to come in.'

Flecks of custard spattered the general area as he spoke, but the largest blob hit Sam's tie and dribbled down onto his shirt. Sam didn't really care, although he knew his mum might be a bit annoyed. Lloyd wasn't the neatest or tidiest person in the class, but he was his friend, and Sam liked him.

The first few days at school had been tough - especially the break times. Sam had kicked a stone around the playground, watching the other Year Sevens playing football and pretending he wasn't interested when really all he wanted was to be one of them. He hadn't managed to summon up the courage to ask if he could join in in case they'd said no. Then he'd got to know Lloyd and within the space of a day he was in the game. So the choice between football and sitting in the dining hall eating treacle pudding was a non-starter. He grabbed a muffin and a banana and stuffed them into his pocket for later.

'Ready?' Lloyd asked, wiping his mouth with his sleeve.

'Yeah, let's go and show 'em how it's done!' Sam replied with gusto.

Ten minutes into the game the ball went over the eight-foot-high school fence, and with the Deputy Head on playground duty no one was about to risk detention by

scaling it. Then the rain came down and the kids scattered back to their classrooms.

'I'll let you have a go on my new Xbox when you come over to me next time,' Lloyd said on the way in. 'I've got tons of cool games for it too.'

'You've got the new Xbox! Wow!' Sam exclaimed. He'd already been told he'd never get one - not even a PlayStation, which *everyone* had by the time they were in Year One! 'Waste of time and good money,' his dad had said grumpily the last time Sam had asked - and every other time Sam had asked. He hadn't given up trying though. He'd probably ask his dad again at the weekend. There was still the outside chance the answer might be a yes.

Lloyd had everything; it didn't seem like it was a big deal in his house. He was getting a brand new top-of-the-range mobile phone for his next birthday - it was an iPod and mobile rolled into one. As soon as he got it he said Sam could have his iPod as he wouldn't need it any more. He'd already invited Sam to his birthday even though it wasn't until some time in February.

'Can't wait,' Sam gushed, and he really couldn't. 'But hang on a minute, I thought we were going to yours today.'

'I thought it was yours today.'

'So which one is it?'

'We'll find out when one or both sets of parents pick us up, won't we?' Lloyd laughed.

Nothing seemed to faze Lloyd. He took everything in his stride and he was good at everything. Not that Sam wasn't clever. His reports always said he was a bright kid, and he usually did pretty well in most subjects. But just not with the style and ease that Lloyd had.

Double Science, followed by PE, double English, and Reading took up the rest of the afternoon and when the bell blared at 3.55, waking him and the rest of the class up from their silent reading, or silent sleeping, as Sam called it, he

threw his homework, his reading book and his pencil case into his rucksack and headed over to Lloyd's desk.

'Ready?' he asked him.

Lloyd looked up through his unruly mop of red hair. 'You bet! Let's get outta here.'

'Wish they'd hurry up. It's almost half past four,' Lloyd muttered. 'They're late and it won't be funny soon!'

'Yeah, it's freezing,' Sam added. He was shivering, but trying hard not to show it as Lloyd wasn't even wearing a coat – it was stuffed in his school bag as usual. Sam turned his collar up at the wind, and then gave it his back, but the wind cut through him anyway.

Lloyd had pulled his mobile phone out and was staring at it angrily. 'Useless piece of junk! Battery's always dead or dying! Where's your phone, Sam?'

That was the thing about mobile phones – they were useless if you didn't charge them up and it didn't matter if they were your basic model or the top of the range and able to perform every function you might possibly want and hundreds you definitely didn't need or even know were there. Lloyd probably only remembered to charge his phone when it was completely dead.

'Left it behind,' Sam said. He didn't feel like admitting that there was no way his dad was going to let him have one just yet. Sam had already been working on his mum though, and there was the slim possibility that he might get one in the summer.

The sky was overcast, with angry black clouds that seemed to be warning them that a drenching was not too far away. The school bus had gone, taking half the kids home, and the others had run for waiting cars, engines idling, as soon as they were let out. Others, who lived locally, had legged it as soon as the bell rang. No one wanted to be left hanging around outside an empty school on a Friday afternoon.

Soon, apart from Sam and Lloyd, there were only a few other kids waiting by the side of the road. One by one they were picked up until only Sam and Lloyd and one other kid were left. The clouds decided at that moment to open up and add to the boys' already dampened spirits by drenching them as they ran for cover under a tree.

Just then a car slowed down next to them and the back passenger door flew open.

'Get in quick!' the driver called out.

Sam was impressed. The car was huge, like one of those big flash Mercs you see ferrying celebrities and rock stars around. Sam knew Lloyd was pretty wealthy, but he hadn't realised his family was *that* rich. He knew Lloyd's dad was big in music, but he wasn't sure exactly what he did. Maybe he was a famous singer, or a producer, like Simon Cowell, or someone like that. There was a lot he didn't know about Lloyd, but that was okay as he was going to be in this school for a very long time. His parents had promised him and Tab – that was his older sister – that they had settled and wouldn't be moving for at least a few years. Sam believed them because they had never actually said that before, and because his mum had finally planted asparagus in the garden. Sam had looked it up in the *Grow Your Own Vegetables* book that was always sitting on the kitchen table. Asparagus takes a few years to grow, so that meant they would have to stay there for at least three years.

The car gleamed brilliant white against the darkening sky like a beacon calling 'come inside where it's warm and dry' – and that's what Sam did. He followed Lloyd in and slammed the door shut quickly to keep the rain out.

He sank back into the shiny, dark leather upholstery, and the car moved off with a soft purr and the barely audible click of the central locking. The rain rattled on the roof, but Sam didn't notice it – the inside of the car took all his attention. It was like being in some kind of spaceship – everything was sleek and expensive looking, even the door

handles had a polished wood trim around them which matched the trim around the seats, and the CD player, and the DVD player. There were hundreds of other buttons, too, and Sam found it hard to resist pressing them all.

'You'll warm up soon,' Lloyd's dad said. 'Had a good day, boys?'

'Yes, sir,' Lloyd replied, buckling his seat belt.

Sam couldn't imagine calling his dad anything other than Dad. Sir seemed so formal, but he followed Lloyd's lead and said, 'Yes, sir,' and added, 'Thank you. Sir.'

An elbow in his side made him look at Lloyd, who was laughing silently at him. 'What?' he whispered with palms upraised, but he'd gone red with embarrassment, which made Lloyd double up with a fit of giggling.

'What's so funny? Do you want to share the joke?' Lloyd's dad asked.

Lloyd straightened up in his seat and pulled a poker face. 'Oh, it's nothing, sir. Boring for grown-ups. Kids' stuff, you know.'

'Well, here's something to keep you going. Help yourselves,' he said, tossing a bag into the back seat, 'and I'll put the window up, so you don't have to whisper all that 'kid stuff '. There's CDs and DVDs back there if you get bored.'

The window that divided the back section of the car from the front whooshed up, enclosing them in their own private den. Sam wished his dad was like this, and had a car like this with a DVD player in the back and enough room to lie down. You could practically *live* in a car like this.

The contents of the bag were another surprise. It was full of crisps, chocolates, sweets, fizzy drinks, and tons of other bad stuff. But the boys were in heaven. They gaped at each other, boggle-eyed in amazement, before diving into the junk food paradise.

Twenty minutes later, they'd eaten as much as they could manage without throwing up, which was a fair amount, and