

About the Olympic Vista Chronicles

Everything twelve-year-old Adelaide Winter knows about her Washington state hometown is turned on its head when Darius Belcouer moves to Olympic Vista at the end of summer 1986.

The two become fast friends as they bond over the mystery of a local haunted house Darius wants to explore. The house, it turns out, is only the tip of the iceberg. They quickly discover the more they dig, the more they uncover, and the trail leads back to The Link, a research and development facility in town. Together, Adelaide and her friends delve into the strange occurrences around Olympic Vista.

A tale of friendship, horror, and coming of age in the late 80s.

Keep reading for a preview of *Songs from the Wood*.

Preview

Olympic Vista Chronicles: Songs from the Wood

Amidst the cacophony of jeers, laughter and friendly banter, the silence in the front most bench of the school bus was deafening. It was early morning and the front lawns and gardens sparkled with morning dew. The school year had only recently begun and most of the students were still excited for the potential the next ten months held. The pleasant-faced driver pulled the yellow school bus onto the side of the road and opened the door to let the final batch of students climb aboard.

Adelaide tucked her long brown hair behind her ear as she stared out the window. Her black leather wrist cuff, which was studded with black and white squares, peeked out from the cuff of her denim jacket. She wore her usual solemn expression as she admired a garden alive with echinacea. Adelaide had no idea what the pink flower was called, but she wondered how it would look in her own yard. Once the new arrivals were safely seated, the bus continued its trek down the streets of Olympic Vista toward James Morrison Elementary School.

“Won’t you talk to me? Normally?” Tetsu begged. He sat slumped in the seat beside Adelaide. Behind him, their friend Kurt shook his head, amused.

“Isn’t this *normal*?” Adelaide asked with a strange cadence to her voice. She plastered a fake smile across her face before she turned and looked at her best friend. A few days ago, Tetsu had suggested Adelaide’s usual monotone voice made her sound like a robot. While she’d heard similar comments from people in the past, his words wounded her and she wasn’t ready to forgive him. “It is,” she paused for emphasis, “what *you* wanted. Isn’t *it*?”

Tetsu slumped further into his seat. “It really isn’t.”

The clear sky had already started to cloud over as the bus pulled up to its usual spot outside the sprawling, one story, beige building. A large white sign with black letters spelled out James Morrison Elementary School. Students collected their bags and pushed their way to the exit as the bus doors opened. Adelaide, who preferred a seat at the front of the bus, was one of the first students off. She left without looking at Tetsu and made her way toward the covered area of the school grounds.

“Adelaide!” Julie called as she exited the bus a few people behind Adelaide. Like most of the girls in their grade, Julie wore vibrant skirts and matching tops. Today she was dressed in a bright pink skirt and sweatshirt.

Julie didn’t live in Adelaide’s neighbourhood. She boarded the bus several stops prior to Adelaide’s stop. Sophie, who did live on the same street at Adelaide, often sat with Julie on the bus. While Sophie often spent time with Adelaide, Tetsu and Kurt outside of school, she had dedicated this year to being popular. Popularity did not follow Kurt or Tetsu around, but today it seemed to follow Adelaide.

Adelaide stopped and turned. Julie and Sophie approached her. The two girls walked in step with each other and Adelaide tried not to frown.

“I’m so excited about this weekend. I think your mom is just the best! Will that cool guy with the cowboy hat be there?” Julie prattled.

“Waylon?” Adelaide’s brow furrowed. “He’s our roommate.”

“It’s so *cool* that you have roommates.” Julie flicked her crimped brown hair over her shoulder.

“Okay,” Adelaide said confused. “When will he be where?”

Julie giggled in response.

Adelaide gritted her teeth at the noise. She turned and searched Sophie’s face, but Sophie refused to meet her gaze. Tetsu and Kurt stepped in next to the three girls.

Julie turned as the shiny black Lincoln Town Car pulled into the parking lot. Everyone else’s gaze followed. They watched as Davia Belcouer climbed out of the passenger’s side. Her butter

yellow blouse, which had lacy frills down the front, was tucked into her jeans. She wore shiny black shoes and a pair of socks that matched her top. Her long blond hair was coiffed like the models in the latest issue of *Teen Beat*. She slung a jean jacket over her shoulder and closed the car door.

While everyone else stared at Davia's exit from the car, Adelaide's gaze fell on Darius, who got out of the back seat. Davia and her older twin brother had moved from Boston with their parents at the end of the summer. Both of them had a faint Boston accent, but that seemed to be where their similarities ceased. Where Davia strived to be popular, Darius was more determined to have fun and explore the strangeness of Olympic Vista. A smile played at Adelaide's lips as she recalled sneaking out of her house to investigate a so-called haunted house at Darius' suggestion. The entire adventure had left the group with more questions than answers.

Darius' eyes were wide and hungry for excitement as he looked about the schoolyard. They made Adelaide yearn for something she couldn't quite describe. She flushed and looked down at the ground as he caught sight of her.

"I love her clothes," Julie murmured.

Sophie sighed and rolled her eyes.

Although Davia was new to the school this year, she had already proved herself to be one of the most popular girls at James Morrison Elementary School, much to Sophie's dismay. Last night Adelaide, Kurt and Tetsu had listened to Sophie lament about Davia in the Hideout, a room in the basement of Sophie's house.

Adelaide looked up as Darius made his way across the parking lot toward them. He gave her a big wave and an even bigger grin.

"She killed a person, you know," Tetsu said. His words interrupted everyone's thoughts.

"What?" Julie gasped as they all turned to look at him.

"Davia. She killed a person, but she's too young and rich to go to jail." He nodded knowingly.

"Yeah, that's true." Sophie followed Tetsu's lead.

"I have to warn people," Julie gulped. She turned and ran off to another group of students nearby.

"That was mean," Adelaide said in her usual monotone voice.

Tetsu shrugged. The four of them watched as Davia approached Farrah Turner, last year's most popular female sixth grader. Farrah's blond hair had also been teased and sprayed to perfection. Today she wore her rhinestone jean jacket. If the most popular girl this year wasn't Davia, it would be Farrah.

Darius grinned at Adelaide as he joined the circle of friends out front of the school. Adelaide's lips curved slightly and offered a small smile back.

"What's going on guys?" Darius asked.

"Tetsu is up to no good," Adelaide said in her deadpan voice.

Darius frowned at Tetsu.

"Come on," Sophie interjected. She tilted her head to the side with an imploring look at Adelaide. "That was funny."

"Only until it catches up with you both," Adelaide warned them. She turned to Darius. "Want to walk?" Adelaide asked. "You can come too, Kurt."

Kurt brushed his reddish-brown hair out his eyes and looked between Adelaide and Darius, and Sophie and Tetsu. Darius smiled at him. Of all of Adelaide's friends, Kurt was his favorite. He reminded Darius of Quinton, a boy from Wiltshire Preparatory Academy back in Boston. The two hadn't been friends exactly, but Darius had stepped in when classmates bullied him.

"See you guys," Kurt said to Sophie and Tetsu as he fell in step with Darius and Adelaide.

Darius hadn't been able to stop thinking about the house he, Adelaide and the rest of the group had investigated last week. As far as they could tell, a mad scientist or two had attempted to make their own Frankenstein's monster in the basement of an otherwise deserted house. After Darius and his new friends drew attention to the building, the authorities had intervened. Darius had kept an eye on the paper ever since, but there had been no mention of an arrest or the incident itself. If the authorities covered up the dead bodies in basements, Darius reasoned there were even more mysteries in the small town to unravel.

"Maybe we should look into the bird man," Darius proposed. He was desperate to find something else to look into. His breath hitched as he recalled how alive he'd felt when he looked into the haunted house. Adelaide had seemed as invested as he was. And they'd held hands under the table in the kitchen. He wanted to spend more time with her.

"Grover Jergen?" Adelaide asked. "I don't even know where we'd start."

"We could check other newspapers for signs of aggressive birds outside of Olympic Vista. Maybe he's gone further afield. Or we could try to track down his family," Darius suggested.

“Good ideas.” Adelaide nodded. “But if those agents we saw at the house are on the look out for him, we probably won’t get to him before they do.”

“I still can’t believe you two broke into a government building and looked at secret documents.” Kurt shook his head. “I’m afraid Adelaide is probably right, though. I suspect they have vaster resources than either of you.”

Darius turned and smiled at Kurt. “You really do read a lot, don’t you?”

Kurt’s cheeks turned a light red. “I guess so,” he mumbled.

“Sorry, Kurt. I didn’t mean to embarrass you. It’s a good thing,” Darius assured him. He thought about the envelope he and Adelaide had found inside the office building and about all the other information that must be stored inside those walls. He desperately wished he still had the key card he’d stolen from the agent’s car, but he knew Adelaide had been right to make him leave it behind in the office building.

The bell rang and they filed inside.

It was mid-morning and Adelaide’s classmates fidgeted in their desks. Their teacher, Mr. McKenzie, had been reviewing the multiplication tables and very few students enjoyed it.

Adelaide’s stomach rumbled. She hoped no one noticed. Her mother had forgotten to get groceries again and the brown banana and stale rice cake Adelaide scavenged for breakfast hadn’t done much to fill her stomach.

“And just before recess, let’s talk current events,” Mr. McKenzie said to the class. “As you all know, I encourage you to read the newspaper. It’s important to be aware of what’s going on. Can anyone give me some examples of things going on right now?”

A girl named Heather put up her hand.

“Yes, Heather?” Mr. McKenzie asked.

Adelaide thought she detected a hint of surprise in his tone.

“Whitney Houston won at the MTV music awards,” Heather offered.

“That is current events. Thank you, Heather. Anyone else?” Mr. McKenzie asked.

The room filled with silence.

“Alright, well, for example, it looks like some local flocks of birds are becoming increasingly territorial. Do any of you recall when Pine Park closed late this summer for a short time?”

A few people put up their hands, Adelaide included. She sensed Darius, who was often attentive in class, sit up straighter.

“Very good! You followed the news.” Mr. McKenzie smiled.

“No,” Brody said. “My neighbour told me about it. A bird snatched a whole apple right out of her hand. She screamed really loud when it flapped in her face. Made me glad I stayed home and played video games all summer.” Brody wore a grim smile.

“And thank you for that, Brody.” Mr. McKenzie smiled a tight smile and nodded. “Fresh air is good for you, but I’m glad you weren’t the victim of a fowl mugging at the park.” Mr. McKenzie paused for dramatic effect. “Anyone? No?”

Adelaide chuckled quietly to herself. Mr. McKenzie winked at her.

“Alright then.” Mr. McKenzie opened his mouth to carry on when another student put his hand up. “Yes?” Mr. McKenzie asked as he nodded in the student’s direction.

“That’s not exactly current though, Mr. McKenzie,” Reggie pointed out.

“Thank you, Reggie. I’m getting there. It seems there was another similar incident just outside Seattle.” The bell rang and students shoved their books into their desks. “Take it how you will, students. I’m not sure if we should put out bird feeders to placate them or just be wary. Go! Enjoy your recess.” He waved them to freedom.

“We could stay inside and play video games,” Brody suggested. “That would be safer.”

“Video games can’t be the solution to everything, Brody.” Mr. McKenzie chuckled. “Off you go!”

Adelaide felt bad for Brody. He was a bulky kid, the kind of boy who would either grow into his size or forever be called names by his peers. Brody had sausage fingers and chubby cheeks, and his short-cropped hair made his head look too big for his body. He smelled vaguely of meatloaf and body odour.

Brody didn’t have a lot of friends and so last year Adelaide had taken care to be extra nice to him. She’d greeted him before school and said goodbye at the end of the day. She’d been rewarded with her initials next to his. According to several people who sat next to him, Brody doodled “AW + BT” all over his notebooks and surrounded them with a heart.

Adelaide hadn’t said anything about it, but it made her uncomfortable and she hadn’t been quite as friendly to him since.

Running shoes squeaked against the floor as the students migrated to the playground and field. There was the usual hum of conversation, but Adelaide’s attention was on Darius. He walked

alongside her and she caught a whiff of pine and sandalwood, which she'd come to associate with him. Adelaide inhaled through her nose and savored the smell.

"I bet it's Grover Jergen!" Darius exclaimed. "I didn't see the article because I only looked at the local paper." He grimaced. "I should have looked at other papers."

Adelaide nodded. She suspected Darius was correct, but she wasn't sure how they could go investigate in Seattle.

"Maybe Farrah will be at the party," Tetsu teased Kurt as they passed through the school doors and spilled out onto the school grounds. "You could kiss her." Tetsu puckered his lips.

"Shut up," Kurt mumbled. He looked down at the ground and kicked a rock.

"What's this party everyone is talking about?" Darius asked.

"Yes, what is this party?" Adelaide echoed. She had almost forgotten her conversation with Julie earlier.

"Sophie told everyone you're having one." Tetsu shrugged. "I figured you knew. Part of this new you you've got going on."

Adelaide's hands turned clammy. A shiver ran down her spine and her vision started to blur. She felt like the world was being pulled out from under her feet and there was nothing to grab onto.