

## Chapter 1

# Who is he?

'ALEX!' says my father. 'What are you doing?'

'I'm coming,' I say.

I take my bag and go into the garden. The sky is blue and the sun is shining. It's a nice day.

Mum and Dad are sitting at a table in the garden. They are eating breakfast and drinking tea. The garden is green in the morning sun.

'Eat your breakfast, Alex,' says Mum.

'I'm not hungry, Mum,' I say.

'You're always hungry,' she says.

'It's only eight o'clock,' I say. 'I'm never hungry at eight o'clock.'

'Is it eight o'clock?' says Dad. 'Come on, Alex.'

'Goodbye, Mum,' I say.

'Goodbye.' She looks at Dad. 'Don't drive fast, Michael,' she says.

I smile. 'Dad never drives fast,' I say. 'Dad is a slow driver. He always drives in the slow lane on the road.'

'I like driving in the slow lane,' says Dad. 'You don't see things in the fast lane.'

Mum looks at me and smiles. Dad and I walk to the car.

Dad sells children's games and books to shops in the country. I like driving in the country with Dad. He sells the games and books to nice people.

Dad puts the books and games in the car. We get into the car.



Soon, we are driving across the town. People are walking on the streets and looking in shop windows.

I turn the radio on.

We listen to a song on the radio. I sing the words to it. Dad doesn't know the words to the song but he sings too. We listen to a woman talking about horses. We listen to a man talking about English hotels. I turn the radio off.

We drive out of the town and into the country. The fields in the country are pretty. Black and white cows are eating grass in the fields. The houses are big here.

I look at the sky. I see big clouds. They are rain clouds.

Soon, it is raining. The cows stand under the trees. It is cold.

'I'm hungry, Dad,' I say.

'You're always hungry,' says Dad.

'I'm a boy,' I say. 'Boys are always eating.'

I see a café on the side of the road. 'Can we stop for food at the café?' I ask Dad.

'Okay,' says Dad.

He stops the car near the café and gets out.

'You sit in the car,' he says. 'It's cold and wet out here.' He puts on his hat. He smiles and shuts the car door. He runs into the café.

I look at the rain on the window. It's a wet day. I look at the cars on the road. I turn the radio on. I turn it off again.

*What's Dad doing?* I think. *I'm hungry!*

The door of the car opens.

'Dad...' I say.

But it's not Dad. I don't know this man. He is tall with black hair.

*What's he doing? He's getting into our car!*

He has a bag. It is wet. His black trousers and blue coat are wet too. And he smells. His clothes smell dirty.

He looks at me. He doesn't speak.

'What...what are you doing? Who are you?' I ask.

He doesn't answer.

'This is my father's car,' I say. 'He's in the café. He's going to be here soon.'

The man smiles. 'No, he's not, boy,' he says.

I look at the café. I can see people sitting at the tables. But I can't see Dad!

'Where is he?' I say.

The man opens his bag and takes out a gun. He puts the gun to my head. The gun is cold.

I don't like this man. This man is bad.

'Where's Dad?' I say. 'Where *is* he?'

'Don't ask questions, boy,' he says. 'Don't talk to me!'

He puts the gun in his bag and drives onto the road. I look out the window. It is raining. The sky is grey.

I am in a car with a bad man.

WHERE IS DAD?!