



Chapter 1

Danny quickened his pace. It was getting dark. He glanced at his watch. 6:30 p.m. He was late. He turned a corner and passed a “MISSING” poster taped to a lamppost, a reminder of why Mum wanted him home early. Ten people had disappeared in the last month. Mum had even put pepper spray in his backpack. That was Mum, always worrying.

Her voice echoed in his head. “Make sure you’re back by six.”

He checked his watch again. 6:40. Uh-oh. Better take the short-cut, he thought.

Big mistake.

Jay Carver and his gang were at their usual spot by the shops. Their eyes locked on Danny. He remembered why he usually took the long way round. He tried to walk past but they blocked his path.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Carver said. He didn’t wait for an answer.

The punch shook Danny’s jaw. His face hit the pavement with a crack. He tasted blood. Carver’s pack of hyenas was pointing, laughing. Danny’s vision blurred as tears burned at the corners of his eyes. The shame stung worse than the pain. He made a run for it, heading for the line of trees at the roadside.

“Get him!” Carver shouted.

