



CHAPTER 1

I found the helmet on a beach in Italy. We were on holiday. I'd gone for a walk with Dad and I had run ahead. The old man never could keep up with me. I tripped over something and fell. When I looked back, there it was, sticking out of the sand.

I dusted it off. It was badly rusted. Anyone else might have thought it was an old piece of junk, but not me. My skin was prickling. I had found something important.

I imagined a soldier wearing it to battle thousands of years ago. I could hear Dad calling me, but I didn't answer. All I could focus on was the helmet.



I put it on, just to see how it felt, but it was too big for me. It slipped down over my face so I couldn't see through the eyeholes. Inside, the helmet was dark and stuffy. I couldn't see a thing. The sounds of the waves and the sea breeze had suddenly stopped. I got this weird feeling, like the air was bending around me. Like the ground was shifting under my feet.

When I took the helmet off, everything had changed. I wasn't on a white, sunny beach any more. I was in a narrow tunnel. It was gloomy and full of shadows. The air reeked of stale sweat and body odour. There was a steel gate ahead of me. Light drifted in through the gaps in it. I was alone, but I could hear the rumble of distant voices. Where was I?

