

## CHAPTER 1

### The Ending

The knife was pushed so far into Mr Joseph's stomach that it almost came out of his back. Lionel Ferrier closed his eyes, held the handle tight, and turned it vigorously. Mr Joseph grunted towards the sky as the knife was twisted deep into his intestines, and as the sharp stainless steel sliced through his organs blood pumped out of his body with so much force that it splattered Lionel's chest. Lionel pulled the knife out and jogged away slowly with his friend Ramzi Sanchin following behind him.

They weren't hiding their faces as they ran, and they weren't running to avoid being caught, they were just going somewhere else. The attack took place in front of dozens of other pupils, who looked on horrified, many of them screaming, and all of them too scared to go to their teacher's rescue.

'Don't just stand there!' screamed head boy Otis. 'Get some help, go and get some help!'

His hands trembled so much that it took him several attempts to turn on his mobile phone; as soon

as it was on he called the police, who arrived ten minutes later. But it was too late; Mr Edgar Arnold Joseph had already drawn his last breath in the arms of Otis Westwood the head boy and Mrs Cartwright the history teacher.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Crime Scene

**M**y name is Jackson Jones. I stood and watched a teacher die. For the first time in my life I felt real shock. I didn't panic, I just froze. I wanted to walk away but I couldn't. I tried to walk towards the place of death but I couldn't. I was the quickest at the one hundred metres in my year, I had only been beaten once in the long jump, and my reflexes were sharp, but all that stuff was useless. My whole body actually went numb. They say the brain is like a computer – well, my computer crashed.

Lionel and Ramzi were the same age as me. I knew Lionel, we were friends once, for a short while. Actually we were only friends for two days until we fell out over my MP3 player. I lent it to him and when I got it back it was broken, the screen was damaged. I'd say hello to him sometimes but we were never close friends. I didn't hate him for it, I just didn't trust him. I didn't know Ramzi much, I hardly ever spoke to him, but there was something about him. I didn't

trust him either.

I will never forget the way Lionel put that knife into Mr Joseph. He was so calm, and he did it with such ease. As I watched them both jogging away I thought they must have done this before. They were like hardened gangsters in a movie. It was like just another day at the office, and nobody dared try to go after them.

Films brainwash you. When people die in films the way the blood trickles down the shirt can look quite cool, the death is usually accompanied by music, and they always have just enough time to deliver their last lines, usually a message for the woman or man they love, or their mother, or a message for the whole of mankind. The way Mr Joseph went down was nothing like that. First there was the force of the blood, then urination, and then the very violent convulsions, and the desperate gasping for breath as his body tried to hold on to life. I knew exactly when his body gave up the fight: there was a moment of silence, his back arched, his body stiffened, and then he took his last breath. Trust me, it was nothing like in the movies.

The school was surrounded by police, all entrances were sealed off with that flimsy tape that they always use, and an ambulance came and put a curtain around the body before taking it away. Those of us who saw what happened were told to line up in the dining hall and wait for our parents to come so that we could be

questioned by the police. Although I was hungry I didn't mind waiting, but I felt guilty for feeling hungry, after all this was much more important than my food. I should have been feeling sick after what I just saw, but I was thinking of food.

I looked out of the dining-hall window and saw my mother talking to a newspaper reporter. The reporter gave her a business card and she pushed her way to the front of the crowd and identified herself to the police who were guarding the school gate. As soon as my mother saw me she raced towards me. She's small, but she's strong, and when she put her arm around me and squeezed me she almost took my voice away. I could feel the relief in her voice.

'Jackson, are you all right?'

'Yes, Mum, I'm all right.' I groaned into the collar of her coat.

She stepped back to look at me. 'Are you hurt?'

'No, Mum, but Mr Joseph's been killed. Lionel Ferrier stabbed him, I saw it. None of us kids were attacked, but that Lionel, he just stabbed Mr Joseph and went off. I saw it with my own eyes, I was right near.'