



# READ AN EXTRACT FROM THE SOULHUNTERS

‘Come on,’ he says, as he helps me out of the van.

I sway unsteadily as my feet touch the pavement. A crowd of onlookers have gathered, some filming the scene on their smartphones, others merely gawping, but none come forward to help. The two men who’d grabbed me earlier are now lying on the floor, groaning in pain; one of the men’s arms is twisted at an unnatural angle.

‘You did that?’ I ask in shock. The American boy, tough as he looks, is surely no match for two fully grown men.

‘We have to go,’ he insists, pulling me away through the crowd as a siren sounds in the distance.

‘No!’ I protest, and shake myself free of his grip. ‘The police are on their way.’

‘Exactly. And you’re not safe.’

I frown, confused. ‘How can I not be safe with the police?’

At that moment the van’s front cab opens and a boy in a dark grey hoodie jumps out. Raven-haired, vampire-pale and possessed with eyes as black as pitch, there’s no mistaking him.

Damien.

A horrible sinking sensation swamps me. All my limbs seem to fail me and I lose the will to move. To run. To do anything but stare at my tormentor.

Damien reaches into the front pocket of his hoodie and pulls out a handgun. As he takes aim and fires, I’m yanked sideways into the shelter of a postbox and the bullet hits an office worker instead. She crumples to the ground, her take-away coffee spilling across the pavement.

Screams erupt from the crowd and people scatter in panic. I stare, open-mouthed and dumbstruck, horrified at the bright burst of blood staining the woman’s blouse.

‘Move!’ orders the boy, and he hauls me away from the mayhem. Too shocked to resist, I numbly let him push me through the crush of people. We step off the pavement and sprint down the street. Behind us, there’s a screech of tyres, and I glance back to see the van doing a sharp U-turn. It weaves through the traffic, its driver clearly determined to catch up with us.

In my haste I bump into somebody, stumble and drop my schoolbag in the road.

‘Leave it!’ the boy orders as I turn back to retrieve it. ‘But it has my phone in,’ I protest. ‘I only just got it. My parents will kill me.’

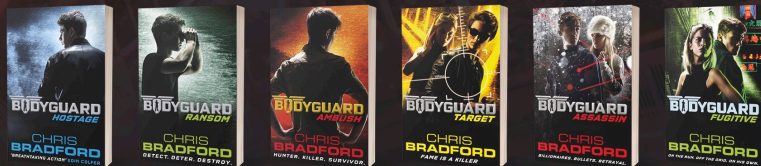
‘You’ll be dead anyway if you don’t move,’ the boy snaps, dragging me away by the arm.

Abandoning the bag, I race after him, my feet pounding on the tarmac, my breath ragged in my throat, my heart thudding in my chest. The roar of the van’s engine is growing louder. The boy cuts left into the street market and we duck under a yellow-and-black no entry barrier. But the restricted access doesn’t stop the van. It careers straight through, shattering the barrier to pieces.

Still the boy urges me on, zigzagging a path through the stalls and shoving people out of our way. Behind us, the van ploughs through a fish stall, sending ice and fish flying through the air in an explosion of silver and scales. Damien - or whoever is driving the van - appears intent on mowing us down, whatever the cost.

Just as we near the end of the market, a loose kerbstone trips me up and I fall to my knees. The boy helps me back on my feet . . . but it’s too late: the van is almost on top of us. He wraps his arms round my head and shoulders in an attempt to protect me, and screwing my eyes shut, I brace myself for the impact.

## ALSO BY CHRIS BRADFORD



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