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Opening extract from  
**Blink and You Die**

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# TWINFORD

CITY OF SPACE  
1974

FLATLANDS

Twinford River

Wolf Paw Mountain

Great Bear Mountain

Little Bear Mountain

Wichitana camp

Emerald Lake

Mountain Ranch Camp

Big Sky Lake

Autumn Lake

Salt Water Pools

Boulevard  
Fir Forest Edge  
Big Park

Dry River Canyon  
Ruby Rock  
dinosaur

Red's House

Frederick  
Lutz's

Lucky Eight Gas Station

Desolate  
Cove  
Meteor  
Island

Planetarium

UP TOWN  
(UPPER-EAST SIDE)  
EAST 23RD STREET

City  
Nurseries

23rd Street Hotel

The Costume  
Museum

Central  
City Park

MAIN STREET

NORTH  
TWINFORD

City Pool

St. Angelina Hospital

FLOWER ROAD

DRY RIVER ROAD

SILVER HILLS  
VINE STREET  
DERILLA DRIVE

COLLEGE  
TOWN  
PIONACCI  
STREET  
SEVEN  
LITTLE

Noyle Museum

Star  
Park

Cathedral Subway

US  
Army

Grace Seven  
Grocers





MOUNTAIN RD.

Big Sky Lake

Emerald Lake

Autumn Lake

Mountain Ranch Camp

Still Water House

LAKE

RD.

MOUNTAIN RD.

Dry River Canyon

Ruby rock climbs

Red's House

Frederick Lutz's

GAS

• Lucky Eight Gas Station

VINE ST.

DRY RIVER ROAD

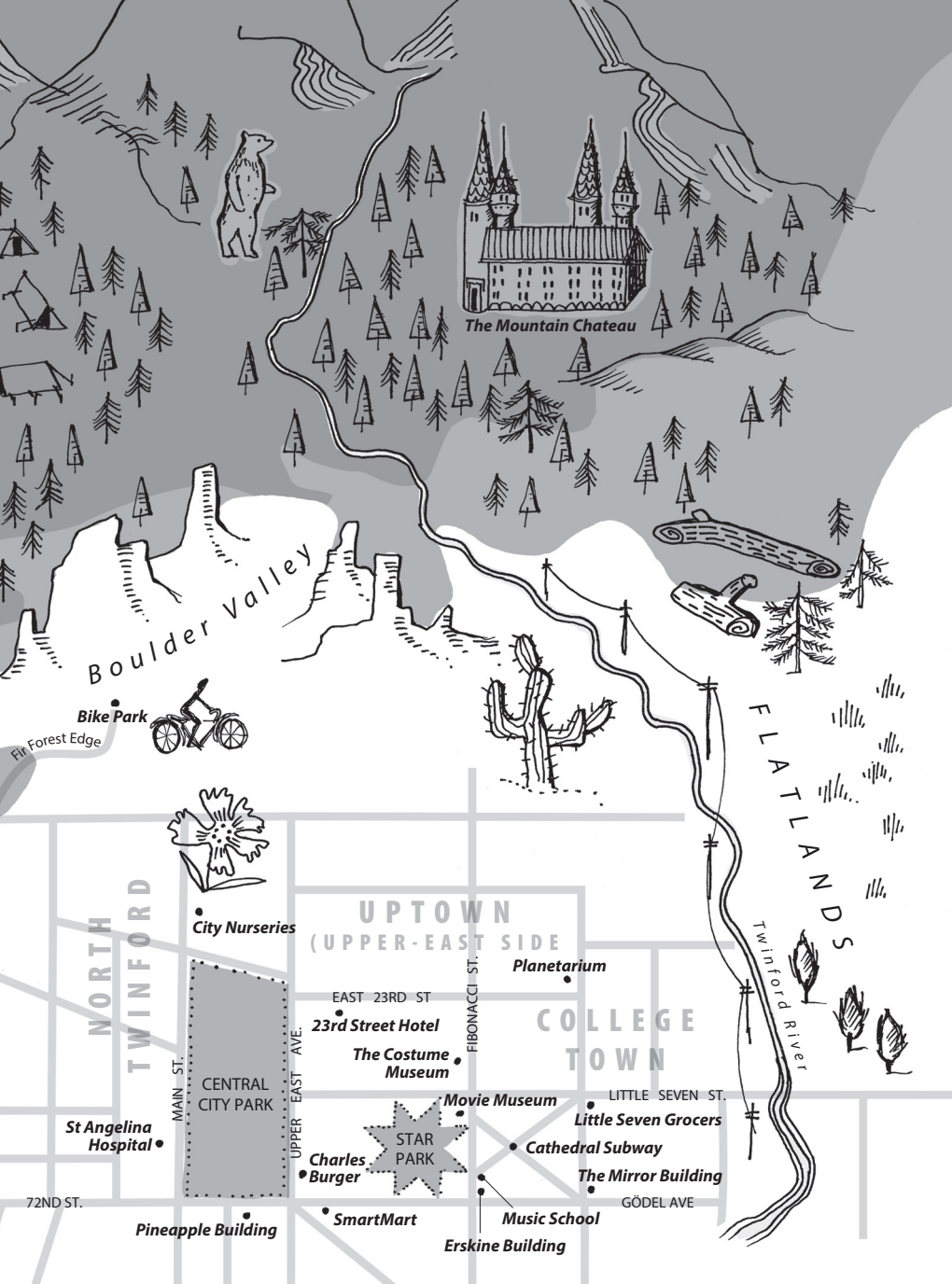
DERILLA DRIVE

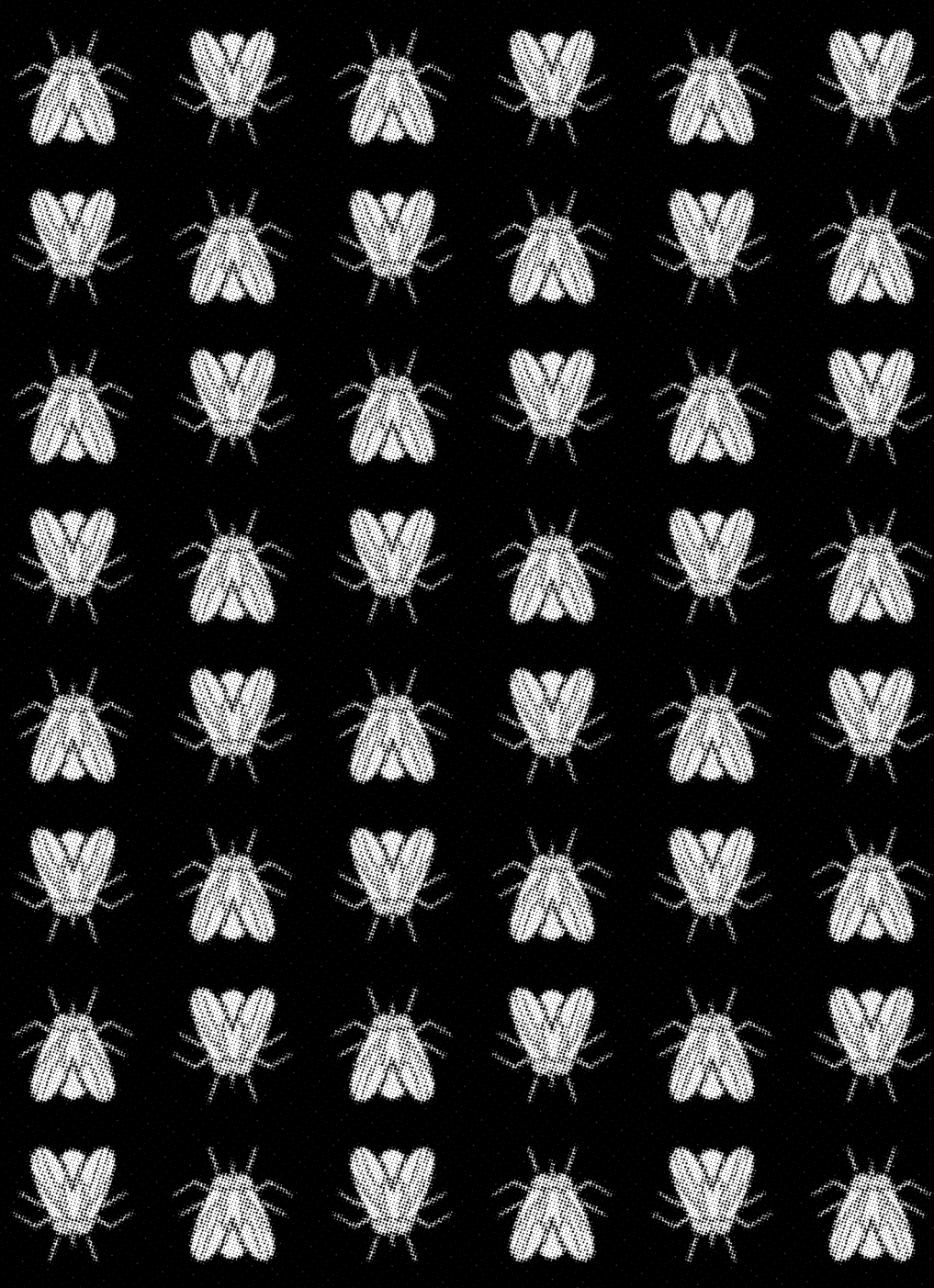
FLOWER ROAD

City Pool •

Desolate Cove  
Meteor Island

NORTHWEST TWINFORD





**‘Close your eyes and  
see the truth’**

*Author anonymous,  
from the indigo  
code-breaker’s bible*

# **The buried fear**

IT HAPPENED ONE BRIGHT APRIL DAY when the child, then barely five weeks old, was sleeping. The world crashed down and the baby opened its eyes, but there was only darkness to see. The walls were packed around it, almost touching, and the doors and the windows all gone. The baby cried out, but no one came. It screamed and clenched its furious fists, trying in vain to push at the tomb of rubble, but nothing happened. Its little mind began to panic, its eyes closed shut and its heart began to hurt.

She was alone and no one would ever find her.

The baby had been left in the care of the housekeeper, who had just put some cookies to cool on the porch when, without warning, the ground began to shift and the buildings began to shake, trees creaked and then cracked. Some of them – the big oak on Amster Green – stood firm, others – the giant cedar of west Twinford – fell.

Sidewalks buckled and streetlights toppled. The earth tremor lasted just a few seconds and Twinford City escaped by-and-large unscathed – a few buildings needed repair, but remarkably no

one, not a soul, lost their life. The townsfolk mourned their fallen trees, but counted their blessings: no one had died. There was only one real casualty; the Fairbank house on Cedarwood was completely destroyed. After 200 years of standing just exactly where it was, looking out across the ever-changing townscape of west Twinford, this historic house was gone.

It was the housekeeper who dug the child out with nothing but 'the hands God gave her'. This woman had endured more than earthquakes in her time and no mere earth tremor was going to have her standing by while an infant lay buried, perhaps dead, perhaps alive. By the time the baby's parents returned to their home, now a wreckage of wood and brick, their daughter was lying in the housekeeper's lap quiet as a lamb and smiling up at them. Everyone was very relieved, their little girl saved, not a scratch to her perfect face, no damage done.

Or so they thought, for in that baby's head a tiny kernel of fear had lodged, a fear which would grow and grow until in her thoughts a monster lurked.

# **An ordinary kid**

WHEN RUBY REDFORT WAS THIRTEEN AND THREE QUARTERS, she found herself confronting the biggest dilemma of her short life. On the desk was an apple split in two. In her hand was a tiny piece of paper.

On the paper were printed two small letters; small letters which spelled something so vast and so terrifying that it made her eyes water.

The letters told of betrayal and murder.

It was the Count who had planted suspicion, posed the grim question and introduced the poisonous thought that the untimely death of Spectrum's most valuable agent, Bradley Baker, might have been 'arranged'.

*'The question is,' he'd said, 'who pulled the trigger?'*

It was the apple, the messenger of doom, which held the answer.

If Ruby was to believe in its truth then life had suddenly become dramatically more dangerous. She looked down at the paper inscribed with the initials of the woman who called the