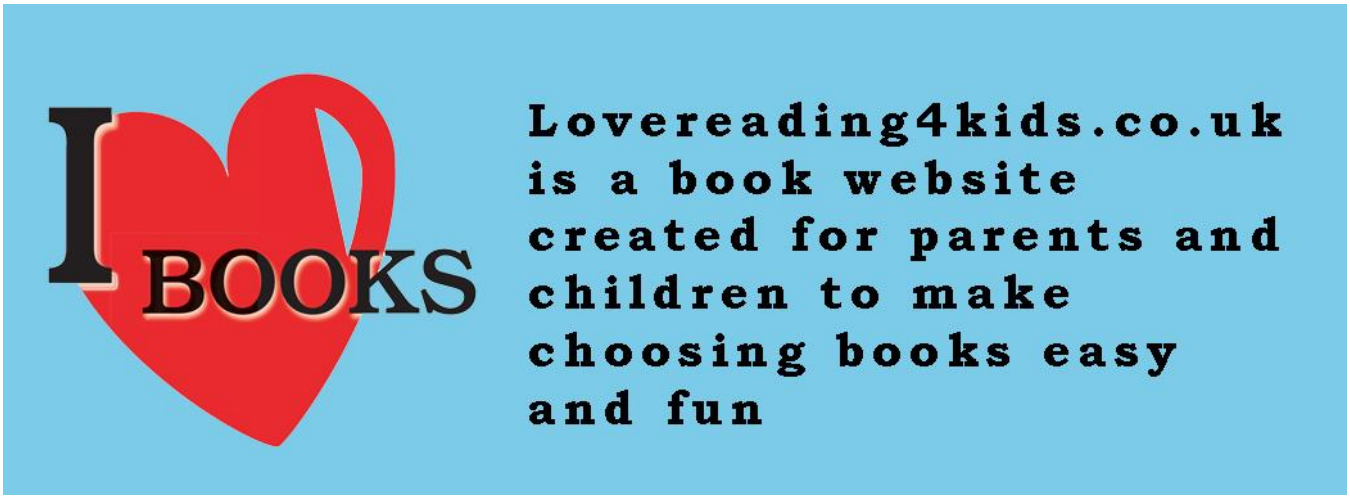



Opening extract from

# Blink and You Die

Written by

**Lauren Child**

Published by

**HarperCollins Children's Books**

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*First published in hardback in Great Britain by HarperCollins Children's Books 2016*
*HarperCollins Children's Books is a division of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd*
*1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF*

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*ISBN: 978-0-00-733428-5*

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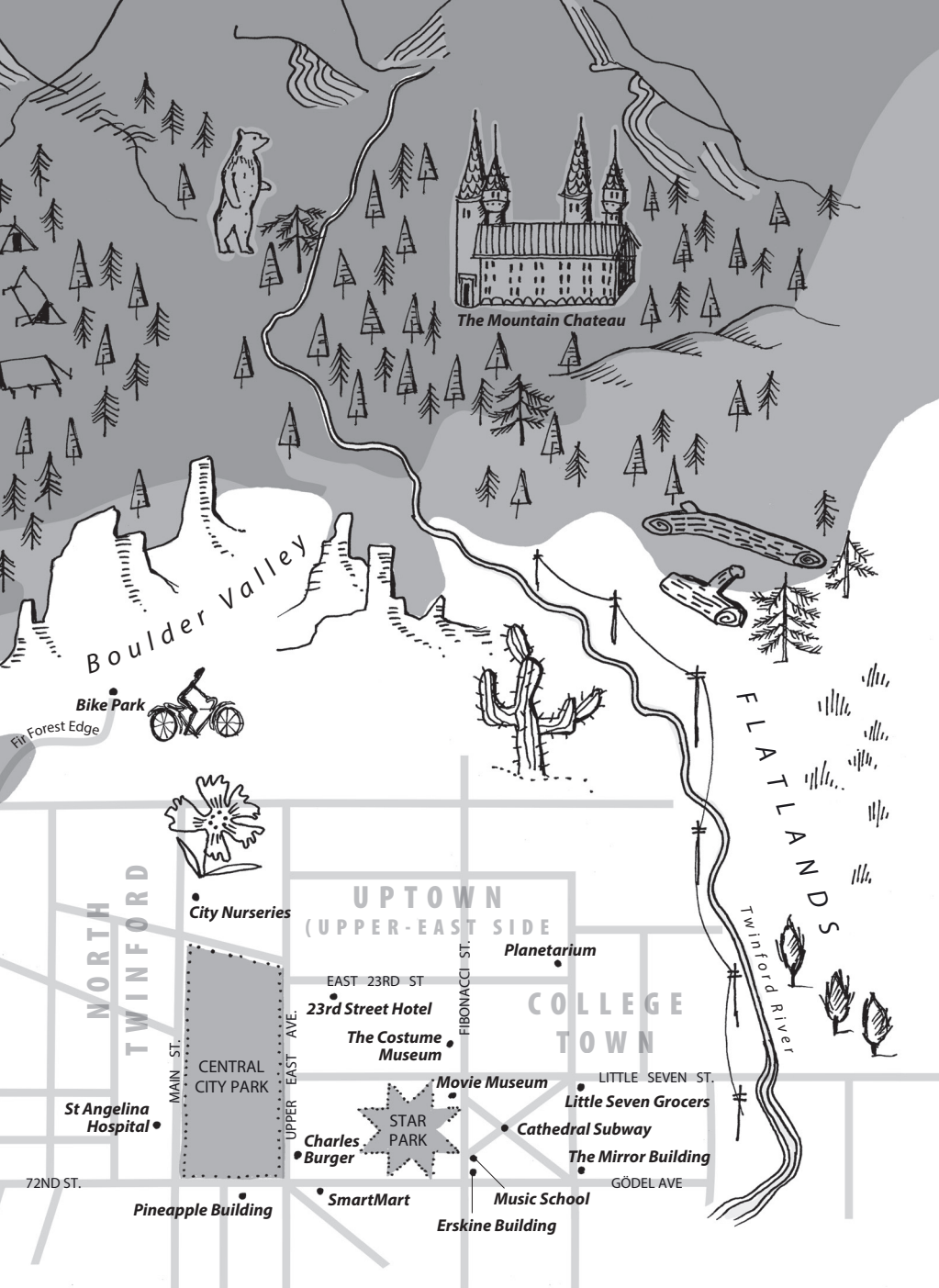
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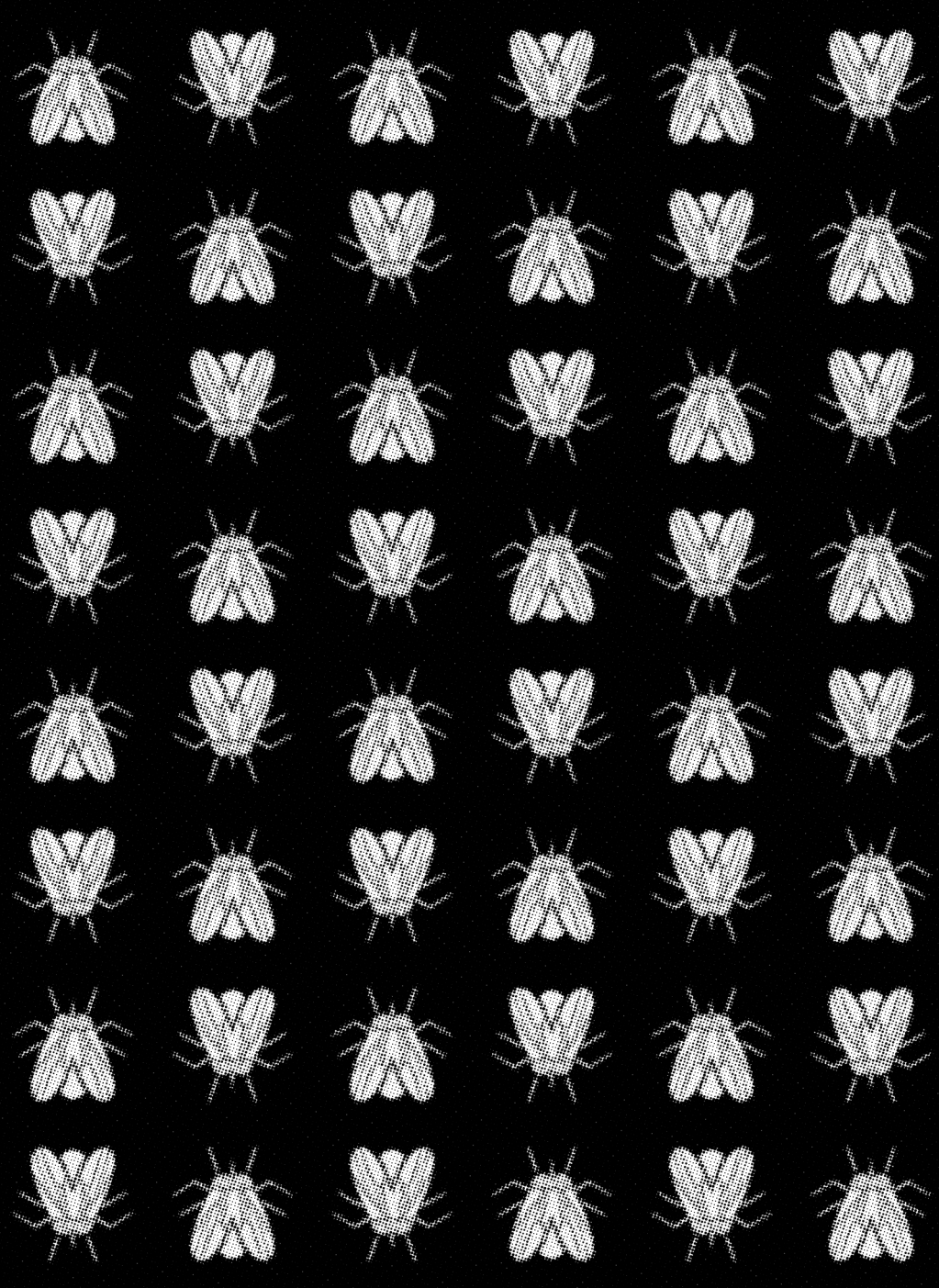
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TWINFORD
CITY OF SPACE
1974
Wolf Paw Mountain
Great Bear Mountain
Little Bear Mountain
MOUNTAIN RD.
Big Sky Lake
Wichitino camp
Emerald Lake
Autumn Lake
Still Water House
Mountain Ranch Camp
LAKE ROAD
MOUNTAIN RD.
Boulder Valley
Fir Forest Edge
Bike Park
Dry River Canyon
Ruby rock climbs
VINE STREET
DRY RIVER ROAD
Red's House
SILVER HILLS
Frederick Lutz's
DERILLA DRIVE
Lucky Eight Gas Station
Desolate Cove
Meteor Island
FLOWER ROAD
City Nurseries
UPTOWN (UPPER-EAST SIDE)
EAST 23RD STREET
23rd Street Hotel
Central City Park
MAIN STREET
NORTH TWINFORD
City Pool
St Angelina Hospital
UPPER EAST AVENUE
The Costume Museum
Planetarium
FIBONACCI STREET
COLLEGE TOWN
LITTLE SEVEN STREET
Movie Museum
Little Seven Grocers
Star Park
PYTHAGORAS ST.
NUMERAL ST.
Cathedral Subway
FLATLANDS
Twinford River


NORTHWEST TWINFORD
TRIPPERDALE
Surf Motel
Abe's bike shop
Elliot's House
The Sibling Islands
Little Bay
Del's
Far West Beach
OCEAN
Twinford Bay
MOUNTAIN RD.
VINE STREET
LARCH STREET
BREEZE STREET
Ruby's High School
BLEAKER STREET
72ND STREET
Charles Burger
Music School
CORAL ST.
The Mirror Building
Erskine Building
GÖDEL AVENUE
Pineapple Building
SmartMart
TWINFORD CENTRE
Melrose Dorff
City Bank
HARKER SQUARE
CLARA SQUARE
City Library
City Museum
Geographical Institute
INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT
Crisp n Clean
FLAUBERT STREET
ACER STREET
Bergwend-Nyle
AMBASSADOR ROW
The Crews'
Wilmot Building
Glenthorn's Jewellers
FULDECKER AVENUE
CHANCE STREET
TWINFORD SQUARE
Oliverian Society
Twinford Bridge
BIRD STREET
EVERGLADE STREET
Tony's Hair Salon
Keller's Jewellery Store
Dime a Dozen
Grand Twin Hotel
Crossways Subway
LIME STREET
ALLEY
CULVER STREET
AMSTER STREET
BIRCHWOOD STREET
CHATTER-BIRD SQUARE
DERWENT STREET
CONSTANZIA RD.
479 THE VILLAGE
BROKER AVENUE
CEDARWOOD
Ruby's House
ROSE STREET
Photo Cam
Blinky's
Lucello's Deli
The Lemons'
Cedar Pond
Mr Parker's
The Grey House
Mrs Beesman's
DRIVE
FABER DRIVE
CEDAR STREET
WEST TWINFORD
Bus Stop
Marty's Minimart
Double Donut Diner
The Full-O-Beans coffee shop
Amster Green Organic Universe
Joe's Supermart
HARLING STREET
Grosvenors
Quick Clean
MAIN STREET
MAVERICK STREET
TRASHFORD
Five Aces Poker Bar
Mouse's Apartment
Cinema
Sunny's Diner
OAKWOOD
Green Street Subway
GREEN RIVERDALE STREET
Slush Store
Cherry Cup
MAIZE
MAPLE
LARCH
FORTUNE
CROCKER
EAST TWINFORD
wooden cycle bridge
MIDTOWN AVENUE
BOWERY
Ice Rink
Penny Books
RIVERDALE
MIDTOWN
Marshlands
MIDTOWN AVENUE
Twinford River
SLOPES
FOUNTAIN SQUARE
PARK
Hauser Ink Building
Berman Block
Carrington Apartments
INK STREET
Lakeridge Apartments
Chinatown Subway
FOUNTAIN AVENUE
Luper Building
City Eye Hospital
AVENUE
RADIO STREET
CLAVEL SQUARE
CHINATOWN
Sandwich Building
DOWNTOWN
AVENUE WALK
Beyer Building
3RD
4TH
Fountain Heights
Skylark Building
Warrington Apartments
The Scarlet Pagoda
Hotel Circus Grande
The Schroeder
Japanese Gardens
Circus Cemetery


MOUNTAIN RD.
Big Sky Lake
Emerald Lake
Autumn Lake
Mountain Ranch Camp
Still Water House
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Cathedral Subway
Charles Burger
The Mirror Building
72ND ST.
GÖDEL AVE
Pineapple Building
SmartMart
Music School
Erskine Building



# ‘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