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Opening extract from

Saved

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Chapter 1
Crash

Luke was upstairs in his room doing his revision when he heard the crash. It wasn't just one bump, but lots of squeals and thumps. He ran to the window and looked down on the mangled cars below.

There was a taxi, with a huge dent in one side. A white van was crushed against a lamp-post, its front bent in by the impact. In the dark, the street-light was sparking, so that the crash scene was lit up every few moments. On the other side of the road, a lorry had hit a line of parked cars. They had smashed into

each other, and one car had risen up and ridden over the roof of another. A red Mini was lying on its side on the pavement.

Luke had never been so excited.

A crash. A real crash. In his street. In boring old Barton Road.

But then Luke saw the people. The back door of the taxi opened, and a woman stepped out, holding one hand to her head. Blood was oozing between her fingers and along the sleeve of her pale jacket.

The taxi driver didn't look hurt, but he was shouting something as he rushed across towards the lamp-post. "I'll kill yer. I'll effing kill yer!" he yelled. Then he stopped in front of the van and saw the driver's limp body lying across the bonnet, covered in broken glass from the windscreen.

Looking down from his room, Luke could tell that the man was already dead.

He looked away, trying to get the picture out of his mind. Across the road, the jumbled cars were like toys kicked aside by an angry child. The Mini seemed to have landed on top of a doll. Luke could see its floppy arms and legs sticking out from under the car.

But it wasn't a doll. He knew that, even though he didn't want to believe it. And he'd seen the shoes before. They were the sensible sandals his sister Anna wore. Their mother always said that anything more modern would be bad for the feet. It was just as well that Luke and Anna were educated at home by their parents. Anna would have been teased if she went to school. No other 13-year-old wore flat shoes with round toes and big buckles.

It must be Anna lying there, crushed under the Mini.

Luke had to get to her.

But it wasn't going to be easy. His parents were out at a church meeting, and they had

done what they always did when they left him at home alone. They had locked the front door. They didn't want Luke to go out or, worse still, to let someone in. Nothing should stop him from revising for his mock GCSEs. Even Anna was sent to study at the library. She must have got back early. She must have been waiting for her parents to arrive with the keys when the Mini rode up onto the pavement and hit her.

Luke rushed down-stairs to the kitchen for the phone. But the hand-set was not there. His father had locked it in the medicine cabinet before he left for church. There was no medicine in that cabinet. Just things Luke's parents wanted to keep away from their children: the phone, matches, the power lead from the radio, the aerial wire for the TV.

Luke's parents didn't believe in medicine, but they did believe in evil. And the phone, TV and radio could be evil. Since meeting Pastor David at the Church of the Healer's Message,

they saw it as their duty to protect their children from such things.

Luke tried pulling at the door of the cabinet, but it wouldn't open. He ran to the front and back doors. Both were locked. He knew the windows had been painted shut long ago. There was no point trying to open them, so he picked up a chair and threw it through the glass. He climbed out into the front garden, cutting his hand on the way.