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Opening extract from **Ghost Stadium**

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For Thomas Macartney

Ghost Stadium

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Chapter 1

The End

Three Year 9 boys walked out of the gates of their high school. They kept a fast pace, matching each other step for step.

Lucas, Jack and Irfan had something to do.

Something exciting.

Something risky.

And they wanted to get started as soon as possible.

Chapter 2

School's Out

The rest of the kids were in less of a hurry to leave school than Lucas, Irfan and Jack. In fact, today was the only day in the year that many of them would hang around the car park and the sports field instead of rushing off.

They chatted.

They laughed.

They signed each other's shirts.

It was the last day of the school year.

Summer!

Jack looked up at Lucas as they passed the crowds at the gate. "Is your mum going to be in?" he asked.

"No," Lucas said. "I told you. She flew out to Tenerife with her boyfriend before I left for school this morning."

Irfan smiled and ran his hand through his short dark hair. "So nobody will know we're not at your house tonight?" he asked.

"Nobody," Lucas said.

"And did you find your dad's old camping gear?" Irfan asked.

Lucas nodded. "I did."

"So we're on?" Jack asked.

"We're on." Lucas smiled. "We take the tent and three sleeping bags. We pick up some food from the supermarket. Then we go in."

Irfan shook his head. "I can't believe we're actually going to do this," he said.

Chapter 3

8-foot Fence

Later that night, the three boys stood in the shadow of an old football stadium. They put down their camping gear and shopping bags on the ground.

From here, they could see a huge wall of corrugated iron, massive columns of crumbling concrete and heaps of scattered rubble. It was all surrounded by an 8-foot-high fence.

Lucas's voice was low and quiet when he spoke. "Do you remember coming here to watch the football?" he asked.

Jack nodded.

"Like it was yesterday," Irfan said.

But it hadn't been yesterday. In fact, the last time the boys had been inside Northface Stadium was five years ago. On the final match day of the final season Yorkshire County FC ever played. Before the club was shut down and the stadium closed to players and fans.

It had been like this ever since. Falling apart, bit by bit. Overgrown with trees and bushes. Slowly claimed back by grass and moss.

The three boys turned when they heard the scream of a train passing into the city station a few streets away. The sound of its horn echoed around the old stadium.

"Come on," Lucas said. "Let's get in there. The longer we hang about here, the more chance someone will spot us going in."