



## CHAPTER 1

# EDEN

Eden Boone kicked the front door so hard it slammed into the wall, taking a chunk out of the plaster. She threw her school bag down on the floor of the hall and sat heavily on the stairs.

“I’m not going back to that vile place, Dad!” she shouted.

Her voice echoed up two flights of stairs in the old Victorian terrace, and there was no reply. Eden scowled, swung around on the bannister and yelled up the stairs again.

“Dad! Did you hear me?”

Only then did Eden notice the note under the fruit bowl, written in blue ink. She picked it up, peered at it.

WORKING LATE AT THE LAB.  
ALL-NIGHTER. ONTO SOMETHING BIG.  
TEA IN MICROWAVE. SEE YOU  
TOMORROW. LOVE DAD XX

Eden sighed and put the letter down. “Not even a text,” she said out loud.

It was normal to get this kind of note from her father. He was a Professor of Physics at the University, and always busy. She had hoped tonight would be different, though. He had promised her a film and curry night, just the two of them. These evenings were important, all the more so now Mum had gone.

Also, after Eden’s rubbish day, she’d been hoping to do twenty minutes of moaning in the kitchen. Stuff about not having the right shorts for stupid hockey, and Miss Bancroft picking on her again.

About what cows Courtney and Katie were being, and about how disgusting the lunch had been today. Basically, what a waste of time school was.

She stomped into the kitchen and checked out the plastic dish in the microwave. She wrinkled her nose at the lemony aroma. Thai green curry with pilau rice. *Could be worse*, she thought.

She flicked the TV on, watching BBC News 24 half-heartedly.

“— *growing crisis in the Middle East*,” said the newsreader’s voice, over pictures of tanks rolling along a desert road. “*The UN Emergency Council is still in session, uncertain as to how to deal with this turn of events. The President has said that in twenty-four hours, the Western world could face the horror of nuclear blackmail — unless the Geneva Conference produces the desired result.*”

*That didn’t sound good*, thought Eden. Mind

you, it was always the same, wasn't it? Someone was always fighting someone, somewhere. It usually all got sorted out.

As she closed the microwave door, she saw the two dark-suited men reflected in it. She turned around and screamed.

Eden grabbed for the kitchen knife and held it out in front of her, trying not to tremble as her heart thudded.

“What the hell?” she snapped. “Who are you? What do you want?”

The two men were seated calmly at the kitchen table. They were both bald, dressed in crisp, dark suits and mirror-shades. One was tall and thin, the other short and burly.

“Eden Boone?” said the taller man. His voice was cold and harsh.

She swung the knife around, narrowing her eyes. “Who wants to know? What the hell are you