



CHAPTER 2

THE SHOPPING CENTRE

The bin rumbled as Connor approached. He walked slowly with his hands out, ready to grab whoever was there.

He stepped around the bin. A black cat was scraping its claws on the side, making thin lines in the green plastic. It saw him and fled around the side of the house.

Connor slumped his shoulders. It finally hit him. He was alone. Every time he thought he saw someone, it would turn out to be another cat, or a dog, or a squirrel. There would be no humans

around to tell him what had happened. He'd never know.

He kicked the bin over and watched as cans and bottles rolled onto the drive. A spark of pain shot up his leg, just like the one he'd felt in his arm when he'd thrown the raisins. That was odd. But so were lots of things right now.

He trudged back down the hill, aware that there were tears in his eyes and glad that no one was around to see them.

He was used to loneliness. It was a feeling he went through every time he had to move to a new home and a new school. But at least there had always been the possibility he'd find someone he'd connect with. Now there was nothing, no one, and there never would be.

He'd even take the company of his foster parents right now. Matt's stories about the army would be better than this horrible silence. And Jane's lectures about feeding a whole family on five pounds a week would be preferable too.