

# Stephen Kelman

Pigeon English

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Stephen Kelman was born in Luton in 1976.

After finishing his degree he worked variously as a warehouse operative, a careworker, and in marketing and local government administration.

He decided to pursue his writing seriously in 2005, and has completed several feature screenplays since then. *Pigeon English* is his first novel.

## Pigeon English

You could see all the blood. It was darker than you thought. It was all on the ground outside Chicken Joe's. It just felt crazy.

Jordan: 'I'll give you a million quid if you touch it.'

Me: 'You don't have a million.'

Jordan: 'One quid then.'

You wanted to touch it but you couldn't get close enough. There was a line in the way:

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

If you cross the line you'll turn to dust.

We weren't allowed to talk to the policeman, he had to concentrate for if the killer came back. I could see the chains hanging from his belt but I couldn't see the gun.

The dead boy's mamma was guarding the blood. She wanted it to stay, you could tell. The rain wanted to come and wash the blood away but she wouldn't let it. She wasn't even crying, she was just stiff and fierce like it was her job to scare the rain back up into the sky. A pigeon was looking for his chop. He walked right in the blood. He was even sad as well, you could tell where his eyes were all pink and dead.

The flowers were already bent. There were pictures of the dead boy wearing his school uniform. His jumper was green.

My jumper's blue. My uniform's better. The only bad thing about it is the tie, it's too scratchy. I hate it when they're scratchy like that.

There were bottles of beer instead of candles and the dead boy's friends wrote messages to him. They all said he was a great friend. Some of the spelling was wrong but I didn't mind. His football boots were on the railings tied up by their laces. They were nearly new Nikes, the studs were proper metal and everything.

Jordan: 'Shall I t'ief them? He don't need 'em no more.'

I just pretended I didn't hear him. Jordan would never really steal them, they were a million times too big. They looked too empty just hanging there. I wanted to wear them but they'd never fit.

\* \* \*

Me and the dead boy were only half friends, I didn't see him very much because he was older and he didn't go to my school. He could ride his bike with no hands and you never even wanted him to fall off. I said a prayer for him inside my head. It just said sorry. That's all I could remember. I pretended like if I kept looking hard enough I could make the blood move and go back in the shape of a boy. I could bring him back alive that way. It happened before, where I used to live there was a chief who brought his son back like that. It was a long time ago, before I was born. Asweh, it was a miracle. It didn't work this time.

I gave him my bouncy ball. I don't need it anymore, I've got five more under my bed. Jordan only gave him a pebble he found on the floor.

Me: 'That doesn't count. It has to be something that belonged to you.'

Jordan: 'I ain't got nothing. I didn't know we had to bring a present.'

I gave Jordan a strawberry Chewit to give to the dead boy, then I showed him how to make a cross. Both the two of us made a cross. We were very quiet. It even felt important. We ran all the way home. I beat Jordan easily. I can beat everybody, I'm the fastest in Year 7. I just wanted to get away before the dying caught us.

\* \* \*

The buildings are all mighty around here. My tower is as high as the lighthouse at Jamestown. There are three towers all in a row: Luxembourg House, Stockholm House and Copenhagen House. I live in Copenhagen House. My flat is on floor 9 out of 14. It's not even hutious, I can look from the window now and my belly doesn't even turn over. I love going in the lift, it's brutal, especially when you're the only one in there. Then you could be a spirit or a spy. You even forget the pissy smell because you're going so fast.

It's proper windy at the bottom like a whirlpool. If you stand at the bottom where the tower meets the ground and put your arms out, you can pretend like you're a bird. You can feel the wind try to pick you up, it's nearly like flying.

Me: 'Hold your arms out wider!'

Jordan: 'They're as wide as I can get 'em! This is so gay, I'm not doing it no more!'

Me: 'It's not gay, it's brilliant!'

Asweh, it's the best way to feel alive. You only don't want the wind to pick you up, because you don't know where it will drop you. It might drop you in the bushes or the sea.

In England there's a hell of different words for everything. It's for if you forget one, there's always another one left over. It's very helpful. Gay and dumb and lame mean all the same. Piss and slash and tinkle mean all the same (the same as greet the chief). There's a million words for a bulla. When I came to my new school, do you know what's the first thing Connor Green said to me?

Connor Green: 'Have you got happiness?'

Me: 'Yes.'

Connor Green: 'Are you sure you've got happiness?'

Me: 'Yes.'

Connor Green: 'But are you really sure?'

Me: 'I think so.'

He kept asking me if I had happiness. He wouldn't stop. In the end it just vexed me. Then I wasn't sure. Connor Green was laughing, I didn't even know why. Then Manik told me it was a trick.

Manik: 'He's not asking if you've got happiness, he's asking if you've got a penis. He says it to everyone. It's just a trick.'

It only sounds like happiness but really it means a penis.

Ha-penis.

Connor Green: 'Got ya! Hook, line and sinker!'

Connor Green is always making tricks. He's just a confusionist. That's the first thing you learn about him. At least I didn't lose. I do have a penis. The trick doesn't work if it's true.

\* \* \*

Some people use their balconies for hanging washing or growing plants. I only use mine for watching the helicopters. It's a bit dizzy. You can't stay out there for more than one minute or you'll turn into an icicle. I saw X-Fire painting his name on the wall of Stockholm House. He didn't know I could see him. He was proper quick and the words still came out dope-fine. I want to write my own name that big but the paint in a can is too dangerous, if you get it on yourself it never washes off, even forever.

The baby trees are in a cage. They put a cage around the tree to stop you stealing it. Asweh, it's very crazy. Who'd steal a tree anyway? Who'd chook a boy just to get his Chicken Joe's?

When Mamma puts her phone on speaker it sounds like they're far away. It makes Papa's voice go proper echoey like he's trapped in a submarine at the bottom of the sea. I pretend like he has one hour of air left, if he doesn't get rescued by then it's all over. It always freaks me out. I'm the man of the house until Papa escapes. He even said it. It's my duty to look after everything. I told him about my pigeon.

Me: 'A pigeon flew in the window. Lydia was even scared.'

Lydia: 'How! No I was not!'

Me: 'She was. She said his wings were making her crazy. I had to catch him.'

I put some flour in my hand and the pigeon landed on it. He was only hungry. I tricked him with the flour. You have to walk proper slow, if you go too fast the pigeon will just get scared and fly off again.

Lydia: 'Hurry up! It's going to bite somebody!'

Me: 'Advise yourself! He only wants to get out. Shut up or you'll scare him.'

His feet felt scratchy on my hand like a chicken's. It was lovely. I made him my special pigeon. I made a proper good look at him to remember his colours, then I let him out on the balcony and he just flew away. You don't even need to kill them.

Papa: 'Good work.'

Papa's voice was smiling. I love it when his voice is smiling, it means you did good. I didn't need to wash my hands after, my pigeon doesn't have any germs. They're always telling you to wash your hands. Asweh, there's so many germs here you wouldn't believe it! Everybody's scared of them all the time. Germs from Africa are the most deadliest, that's why Vilis ran away when I tried to say hello to him, he thinks if he breathes my germs he'll die.

I didn't even know I brought the germs with me. You can't feel them or see them or anything. Adjei, germs are very tricky! I don't even care if Vilis hates me, he's a dirty tackler and he never passes the ball to me.

\* \* \*

Agnes loves to blow spit bubbles. She's only still allowed because she's a baby. I even want her to blow lots of them. As many as she wants and forever.

Me: 'Hello, Agnes!'

Agnes: 'O!'

I swear by God, when Agnes says hello it makes your ears ring like a crazy bell! You love it anyway. When Agnes says hello Mamma cries and laughs at the same time, she's the only person I know who can do it. Agnes couldn't come with us because Mamma has to work all the time. Grandma Ama looks after her instead. It's only until Papa sells all the things from his shop, then he's going to buy some more tickets and we'll all be together again. It's only been two months since we left, you only start to forget them after one year. It won't even be that long.

Me: 'Can you say Harri?'

Papa: 'Not yet. Give her time.'

Me: 'What's she doing?'

Papa: 'Just blowing more bubbles. You better go now.'

Me: 'OK. Come soon. Bring some Ahomka, I can't find any here. I love you.'

Papa: 'I lo

That's when the calling card ran out. I always hate it when that happens. It's always a shock even if it happens every time. It's like at night when I'm watching the helicopters and they go quiet, I always think they're going to crash on me. Asweh, when the engine comes on again it's a mighty relief!

I saw a real dead person. It was where I used to live, at the market in Kaneshie. An orange lady got hit by a trotro, nobody even saw it coming. I pretended like all the oranges rolling everywhere were her happy memories and they were looking for a new person to stick to so they didn't get wasted. The shoeshine boys tried to steal some of the oranges that didn't get run over but Papa and another man made them put them back in her basket. The shoeshine boys should know you never steal from the dead. It's the duty of the righteous to show the godless the right way. You have to help them whenever you can, even if they don't want it. They only think they don't want it but really they do. You only get to be righteous if you can sing every church song without looking at the words. Only Pastor Taylor and Mr Frimpong can do it and both the two of them are proper old. Mr Frimpong's so old there's spiders in his ears, I've seen them with my own two eyes.

At church we said a special prayer for the dead boy. We asked that his soul would be carried into the arms of the Lord and the Lord would soften the heart of his killers so they'd give themselves up. Pastor Taylor made a special message to all the children. He said if we knew anybody with a knife to tell about them.

Lydia was peeling the cassava for fufu.

Me: 'You've got a knife! I'm telling about you!'

Lydia: 'Gowayou. What shall I peel them with, a spoon?'

Me: 'You can peel them with your breath. It's like a dragon.'

Lydia: 'Your breath's like a dog. Have you been licking bumholes again?'

It's our favourite game to see who can make the best abuse. I'm usually the winner. So far I have a thousand points and Lydia only has two hundred. We only play when Mamma can't hear. I chooked myself with the fork. It was only in my arm. I wanted to see how much it hurt and how long the holes would last. I was going to tell everybody they were my magic marks from when I was born and they mean I can see inside your mind. But they disappeared after

one minute. It still hurt like crazy.

Me: 'I wonder what it feels like to be chooked for real. I wonder if you see stars.'

Lydia: 'Do you want to find out?'

Me: 'Or fire. I bet you see fire.'

My Mustang has fire. I've got four cars: a Mustang and a Beetle and a Lexus and a Suzuki jeep. My best is the Mustang, it's just dope-fine. It's blue with fire on the bonnet and the fire is in the shape of wings. It has no scratches because I never crash it, I only look at it. I can still see the fire when I close my eyes. That's what dying must be like, except the fire isn't beautiful anymore because it actually burns.

Manik's papa showed me how to tie my tie. It was my first day at my new school. I hid my tie in my bag, I was going to tell them it got stolen. But when I got to school I got scared. Everybody was wearing a tie. Manik's papa was there with Manik. The whole thing was his idea.

Manik's papa walks to school with him every day. He has to guard Manik from the robbers. Manik had his trainers stolen one time. One of the Dell Farm Crew stole them. When they didn't fit they put them up a tree. Manik couldn't get them down again because he's too fat to climb the tree.

Manik's papa: 'Let them try it again. It'll be a different story next time, little bastards.'

Manik's papa's quite hutious. He's always red-eyes. He knows swordfighting. Asweh, I'm glad I'm not Manik's enemy! Manik's papa put my tie on for me and made the knot. He showed me how to take the tie off without untying it. You just make a hole big enough to get your head through then you take the tie off over your head. That way you don't have to tie the tie every day. It even

works. Now I'll never have to tie my tie my whole life. I beat the tie at his own game!

There's no songs in my new school. The best bit about my old school was when Kofi Allotey made up his own words:

Kofi Allotey:     *'Before our Father's throne  
                          We pour our ardent prayers.  
                          Please don't burn me on the stove  
                          Or push me down the stairs.'*

Asweh, he caught so many blows we called it the Kofi Stick!

At first me and Lydia stayed together at breaktime. Now we stay with our friends. If we see each other we have to pretend we don't know each other. The first one to say hello is the loser. At breaktime I just play suicide bomber or zombies. Suicide bomber is when you run at the other person and crash them as hard as you can. If the other person falls over you get a hundred points. If they just move but don't fall over it's ten points. One person is always the lookout because suicide bomber is banned. If the teacher catches you playing you'll get a detention.

Zombies is just acting like a zombie. You get extra points for accuracy.

When you're not playing games you can swap things instead. The most wanted things to swap are football stickers and sweets but you can swap anything if somebody wants it. Chevon Brown and Saleem Khan swapped watches. Saleem Khan's watch tells the time on the moon, but Chevon Brown's is chunkier and it's made of real titanium. They're both bo-styles. Everybody was happy with the deal but then Saleem Khan wanted to swap back.

Saleem Khan: 'I changed my mind, that's all.'

Chevon Brown: 'But we shook on it, man.'

Saleem Khan: 'I had my fingers crossed, innit.'

Chevon Brown: 'Pussy clart. Two punches.'

Saleem Khan: 'No, man. One.'

Chevon Brown: 'On the head though.'

Saleem Khan: 'The shoulder, the shoulder.'

Chevon Brown: 'Rarse.'

Chevon Brown punched Saleem Khan proper hard and gave him a dead arm. It was his fault for going back on the deal. He was only scared for if his mamma got red-eyes.

I don't have a watch yet, I don't even need one. The bell tells you where to be and there's a clock in the classroom. When you're outside school you don't need to know the hour, your belly tells you when it's chop time. You just go home when you're hungry enough, that way you never forget.

\* \* \*

I was the dead boy. X-Fire was teaching us about chooking. He didn't use a real knife, just his fingers. They still felt quite sharp. X-Fire says when you chook somebody you have to do it proper quick because you feel it as well.

X-Fire: 'When the knife goes in them you can feel where it hits. If it hits a bone or something it feels disgusting, man. You're best going for somewhere soft like the belly so it goes in nice and easy, then you don't feel nothing. The first time I shanked someone was the worst, man. All his guts fell out. It was well sick. I didn't know where to aim yet, I got him too low down, innit. That's why I go for the side now, near the love handles. Then you don't get no nasty stuff falling out.'

Dizzy: 'The first time I shanked someone the blade got stuck. I hit a rib or something. I had to pull like f— to get it out. I was like, give me my blade back, bitch!'

Clipz: 'Innit. You just wanna stick him and get the f— outta there. No messing around.'

Killa didn't join in. He was just quiet. Maybe he hasn't chooked anybody yet. Or maybe he's chooked so many people that he's bored by now. That must be why he's

called Killa.

I was the dead boy because X-Fire picked me. I just had to stand still. X-Fire didn't like it when I moved. He kept pulling me. I felt quite sick but I had to keep listening. I even wanted to listen. It was like when I first tasted mushy peas: it was disgusting but I had to finish it because wasting food is a sin.

I could still feel his fingers in my ribs even after he was gone. It felt very crazy. X-Fire's breath smells like cigarettes and chocolate milk. I wasn't even scared.

\* \* \*

We always go to the market on Saturday. It's all outside so you get proper cold waiting for Mamma to pay, you have to keep your mouth closed to stop your teeth escaping. It's only even worth it for all the dope-fine things you can look at like a remote-control car or a samurai sword (it's only made from wood but it's still proper hutious. If I had the means I'd buy it like that, I'd use it to chase the invaders away).

My favourite shop is the sweets shop. It sells every kind of Haribo you can think of. It's my ambition to try every style there is. So far I've tried about half. Haribo comes in a million different shapes. Whatever there is in the world, there's a chewy Haribo version of it. Asweh, it's true. They make cola bottles, worms, milkshakes, teddy bears, crocodiles, fried eggs, dummies, fangs, cherries, frogs, and millions more. Cola bottles are the best.

I only don't like the jelly babies. They're cruel. Mamma has seen a dead baby for real. She sees them every day at work. I never buy the jelly babies for if it would remind her.

Mamma was looking all over for a pigeon net. I said a prayer to myself that she never found one.

Me: 'It's not fair. Just because Lydia's scared of them.'

Lydia: 'Gowayou! I'm not scared!'

Mamma: 'We can't have pigeons flying in the house all the time, it's dirty, they'll mess everywhere.'

Me: 'It was only one time. He was hungry, that's all.'

Mamma: 'Don't make squeeze-eyes at me, Harrison, I'm not arguing with you.'

Some people put nets over their balcony to stop the pigeons getting in. I don't even agree with it, they're not hurting anybody. I want my pigeon to come back. I even hid some fufu flour in my pant drawer specially for him. I don't want to eat him, I want to make him tame so he'll go on my shoulder. In the end my prayer was answered: they don't even sell pigeon nets at the market. Asweh, it was a mighty relief!

Me: 'Don't worry. If he comes back I'll tell him to find another home.'

Mamma: 'Don't put any more food out for it. Don't think I haven't seen the flour all over the balcony, I'm not stupid.'

Me: 'I won't!'

I hate it when Mamma reads my mind! From today onward going I'll just wait till she's asleep.

I pretended like I didn't see when Jordan stole the lady's phone. I didn't want Mamma to think I agreed with it, she already hates Jordan because he spits on the stairs. I was at Noddy's clothes stall. I saw the whole thing while Mamma was paying for my Chelsea shirt. It was X-Fire and Dizzy who actually got the lady's phone. They were very tricky: they waited until she was talking, then they bumped her to make her drop the phone. They made it look like an accident. The phone fell on the ground, then Jordan came from nowhere, picked the phone up and ran off with it. He squeezed into the crowd and was gone in one second. It was like he was a ghost, he just disappeared. The lady looked around for her phone but it was already gone, there was nothing she could do. It was a clean getaway. Jordan doesn't get paid for helping them, he just gets some cigarettes or one week of freedom where they don't try to kill him. It's not even a good deal. If it was me I'd want a tenner every time.

My new Chelsea shirt is a bit too scratchy. I had to put a plaster on my nipples to stop them getting rubbed off. It's still bo-styles though. The dead boy loved Chelsea as well. He had the proper shirt with Samsung on it, even the away kit. I hope Heaven has proper goals with nets on them, then you don't have to run miles to get the ball every time you score a goal.

There's a million dogs around here. Asweh, there's nearly as many dogs as people. Most of them are pit bulls because they're the most hutious, you can use them as a weapon for if your gun ran out of bullets. Harvey's the worst. He belongs to X-Fire. He makes him bite the swings in the playground, that's how he keeps him extra hutious. He actually hangs off them with his teeth and swings around in the air like a crazy helicopter. Whenever I see Harvey coming I just hold my breath so he can't smell my fear.

My favourite dog is Asbo, he's just funny and friendly. I first met him when me and Dean Griffin were playing football on the green and a dog came and took our ball. It was Asbo. We chased him and tried to tackle him but he was too fast. He burst the ball by mistake. Now we only have my plastic ball left. It always flies away because it's too light. It's very vexing. I'm getting a proper ball soon, it will be made of skin so it won't fly away.

Did you know that dogs can sneeze? Asweh, it's true. I saw it with my own two eyes. Asbo did a big sneeze. It was a shock at first. Nobody suspected it. He did about a hundred sneezes. He couldn't stop after the first one, it was like a machine gun. Every sneeze made a new sneeze. Even Asbo was surprised. He couldn't stop for donkey hours.

Terry Takeaway: 'He's allergic to beer, innit.'

Terry Takeaway put some beer in his hand and gave it to Asbo to drink but Asbo wouldn't drink it. He just made a sad face and turned his head away and that's when he started sneezing. The bubbles went up his nose.

He's called Terry Takeaway because he always takes things away. It's just another name for a thiefman. Every time you see him he's carrying the last thing he stole. It's mostly DVDs or a mobile phone, they're the easiest. He asks you if you want to buy it even if you're just a kid and you have no means.

Terry Takeaway: 'Wanna buy these? Proper copper, worth a bundle.'

Dean: 'What are we gonna do with a load of copper pipes?'

Terry Takeaway: 'I dunno. You could sell 'em.'

Dean: 'Why don't you sell them?'

Terry Takeaway: 'That's what I'm trying to do, innit.'

Dean: 'I mean why don't you sell them to someone who wants them?'

Terry Takeaway: 'Alright, son, cool your boots. I was only asking.'

We weren't even wearing boots! Asweh, Terry Takeaway is dey touch. It's because he drinks beer for breakfast.

\* \* \*

I love easing myself after Mamma puts bleach in the toilet. The bleach makes mighty bubbles, then it's like easing yourself on a cloud. I save up a long one for specially. Nobody's allowed to flush the cloud away until I've done my special piss on it. I pretend like I'm God easing himself on his favourite cloud. I saw on top of a cloud. It was when we were in the aeroplane. We were actually above the clouds. Do you know what's there? Just more sky. Asweh, it's true. Just more and more sky that never runs out. Heaven only comes after.

Mamma: 'You can't see Heaven until you're ready. That's why God hides it with the sky.'

Me: 'But it's still there somewhere.'

Mamma: 'Of course!'

I wanted to see it now. I wanted to see what Grandpa Solomon was doing.

Me: 'I bet he's playing rock, paper, scissors with Jesus.'

Lydia: 'I bet he's cheating.'

Me: 'How! It's not even cheating!'

Lydia: 'Advise yourself!'

Grandpa Solomon says scissors actually beats rock because in the end the rock is so tired from all the chooks that it falls apart. Anybody who says rock beats scissors is just too lazy to wait until the end. It's the only thing I can remember him saying because he died when I was still a baby. It's still true though. Anybody who says it's cheating is just a fool.

Lydia thought the aeroplane was going to crash. It was on the second plane, the one from Cairo to England. We were sitting right next to the wing. You could see it wobble as you went along. I wasn't scared. If an aeroplane crashes the best place to be is next to the wing, that's where it's the strongest. Even Papa said it. The wobbling's normal.

Me: 'Look at it! It's wobbling even more! It's going to fall off!'

Lydia: 'Stop it!'

Mamma: 'Harrison! Stop that palaver. Put your belt on.'

We didn't even crash. I prayed for it before we left the ground.

\* \* \*

When I came home from school there were police outside the flats. There were two police cars and a hell of cops all looking in the bushes and bins like they lost something special. One of the cops was a lady. Asweh, it felt very crazy. She even wanted to be a man. She had the same cop clothes on and everything. She was asking the kids questions, nobody could go home until they'd been interviewed. It was brutal. I think lady cops are a very good idea. They just talk to you instead of hitting you all the time.

A pisshead: 'Do you wanna show me how them handcuffs work? I've been a naughty boy, I think I need a spanking.'

Lady cop: 'Watch it!'

The lady cop just asked us about the dead boy. Did we know where he was that day and if anybody was after him. Did we see anything strange. We just said no. We didn't know anything. We wished we knew more but there was nothing we could do.

Dean: 'Have you got any leads?'

Me: 'She's not a dogcatcher!'

Dean: 'Criminal leads, dumb-arse.'

Lady cop: 'We're working on it.'

Dean: 'If we hear anything we'll text you. What's your number?'

Lady cop: 'Cheeky.'

Then the cops had to go. Harvey was trying to bite the door mirror off one of the cop cars. X-Fire was even making him do it. Killa and Dizzy were cheering him on. They only split when the cops got their acid spray out and went to spray it in Harvey's face. It only makes people go blind but it kills dogs in five seconds.

Me: 'I saw where the dead boy got killed, the blood was everywhere.'

Dean: 'I wish I'd seen it.'

Lydia: 'I don't want to see it.'

Me: 'Yes you do. You're only vexed because you didn't see it. It was like a river. You could even swim in it.'

Lydia: 'Advise yourself.'

I even wanted to jump in it like a fish. If I held my breath long enough I could dive right down to the bottom and if I came up again and I was still alive it would be like the dead boy was still here. He could be my air or the light I saw when I opened my eyes again. I held my breath and tried to feel my blood going round. I couldn't even feel it. If I knew my blood was going to run out in five minutes, I'd just fill that five minutes with all my favourite things. I'd eat a hell of Chinese rice and do a cloud piss and make Agnes laugh with my funny face, the one where I make my eyes go crooked and stick my tongue right up my nose. At least if you knew you could be ready. It's not fair otherwise.

Paradiddle just means a drum roll. It's my favourite word of today. In Music we played the drums. A drum roll is when you hit the drum proper quick with two sticks and make it last a long time. I love paradiddle because it sounds like the sound it makes. Asweh, it's very clever.

The big drum at the bottom (bass drum) has a pedal. You actually play it with your foot. It's brutal. Most people hit the drums too hard like they're trying to break them. It's just a game to them. I only hit them hard enough to make a good sound. I showed Poppy Morgan how to move your foot so the bass drum keeps the same pattern. It's easier if you count in your head. You always count up to four. You hit the pedal on every one. Like this:

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

And you just repeat it for as long as it feels right. Or you can hit the pedal on one and three to make a faster rhythm:

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

But that one's a bit too fast, it makes you feel crazy like you're going to fall off. When I was showing Poppy Morgan how to play the bass drum I smelled her hair by mistake. I got too close and then I just smelled it. It was honey flavour. Poppy Morgan's hair is yellow like the sun. When she smiles to me it makes my belly turn over, I don't even know why.

\* \* \*

You can only see the car park and the bins from my balcony. You can't see the river because the trees are in the way. You can see more and more houses. Lines and lines of them all everywhere like a hell of snakes and smaller flats where the old people and never-normals live (never-normals is what Jordan's mamma calls the people who are not right in the head. Some of them were born like that and some of them went like it from drinking too much beer. Some of them look just like real people only they can't do sums or talk properly).

Mamma and Lydia were both snoring like crazy pigs. I put my coat on and got some flour. It was very late. The helicopters were out looking for robbers again, I could hear them far away. The cold wind bit into my bones like a crazy dog. The trees behind the towers were blowing but the river was asleep. Papa and Agnes and Grandma Ama were all dreaming me, they were watching like I was on TV. The pigeon could feel me waiting for him, he was going to come back tonight, I just knew it.

I waited for the wind to move, then I put a nice big pile of flour on the handrail. I spread it out proper long so the pigeon could see it from miles away. Adjei, the wind came back quick quick and blew it off! I just had to hope he'd smell my plan and come back. I like their orange feet and the way their heads move when they're walking like they're listening to invisible music.

I love living on floor 9, you can look down and as long as you don't stick out too far nobody on the ground even knows you're there. I was going to do a spit but then I saw somebody by the bins so I swallowed it back up again. He was kneeling on the floor by the bottle bank. He was poking his hand under like he dropped something there. I couldn't see his face because his hood was up.

Me: 'Maybe it's the robber! Quick, helicopter, here's your man! Shine your torchlight down there!' (I only said it inside my head.)

He pulled something from under the bin. It was all wrapped up. He looked all around and then he unwrapped the wrapping and I saw something shiny underneath. I only saw it for one second but it had to be a knife. It's the only thing I can think of that's shiny and pointy like that. He wrapped it up again and put it down his pant, then he ran away sharp-sharp towards the river. It was some funny thing. The helicopters didn't even see him. They didn't follow him or anything, they were too high up. He runs proper funny like a girl with his elbows all sticking out. I bet I'm faster than him.

I wanted to keep watching for if something else happened but I had to greet the chief too bad. I waited as long as I could. I don't know why the pigeon never came. He thinks we're going to kill him but we're not. I just want something that's alive that I can feed and teach tricks to.