

## Chapter One

Jon was late for school. His mother was hurrying him out of the door a few minutes before nine, checking he'd got the note she'd written for the teacher in which she asked if it would be all right for Jon to bring the gerbils home for the next week's half-term holiday. Now, Jon headed for the walkways under the flyover. He vanished into the bushes in the middle of the roundabout, re-emerging without his school bag, the black one with red stripes on the handle that usually contained wildlife books, his wrestling magazines and his PE kit. The bushes were Jon's preferred hiding place for the bag. He met Bobby at the top of the village, by the church. Bobby was with his kid brother, Ryan. Jon and Bobby didn't say much to each other.

'You're sagging?'

'Yeah'

Ryan didn't want to sag. He wanted to go to school. Yesterday Jon had offered him two quid if he would sag today, but Ryan wasn't having any of it. So they left him to make his own way down Bedford Road, and Jon and Bobby disappeared down the entries to avoid being spotted as they passed the school. They were seen anyway by their 5R classmate Nicola. She told Miss Rigg, who marked two red circles by their names in the register, and mentioned the boys' apparent truancy to the head teacher on the way to assembly. After assembly the head teacher, Irene Slack, spoke to Nicola, who confirmed that she had seen Jon and Bobby down an entry by the off licence, running in the opposite direction to school. Miss Slack tried to phone Jon's mother. No answer.

Jon and Bobby were on their way down Breeze Hill and out of Walton, past the reservoir, The Mons pub, Smiley's Tyre and Exhaust Centre, straight on to Merton Road and into the heart of Bootle, crossing Stanley Road, over the canal and round the back to the Strand entrance by the bus terminal. It was about two miles.

As they went along, they talked about robbing and sagging. Jon wondered what would happen if they got caught by a teacher or a policeman. Bobby said they'd probably end up in the police station. They were both in school uniform, or most of it. Black trousers, white shirt, grey V-necked jumper, blue and yellow striped tie. Both boys were wearing their brogies. Jon had a bowl 'ead haircut, Bobby a Number 2 crop, straight through with the shears. Jon was four feet and eight inches tall. Bobby was shorter by two inches. They were both ten years old, their birthdays two weeks apart in August.

When the shop assistant in Clinton Cards noticed the uniforms, she called out from behind the till. Bobby and Jon stood there, looking at the extensive selection of trolls on display.

'You're off school then?'

Jon gave Bobby a stamp in the foot. 'We're with our mum,' said Bobby, and with that they left the card shop.

Bobby stole a toy soldier from Superdrug. Bobby took it on the escalators, and tried to make it crawl along the rubber handrail. When the sniper fell or was thrown down the escalating steps, a woman shopper told them off. They should be more careful. The escalator might get jammed. Bobby and Jon ignored her.

The woman was sitting on a bench outside Boots a few minute later, waiting for her mother-in-law, when she saw Bobby and Jon again. They were walking out of the Strand's department store, TJ Hughes, followed by a small child. They were all laughing, the two older boys running forward, stopping and running as the child ran towards them laughing. The woman watched as the child's mother appeared, in a bit of a panic as she called her son back and scolded him. The two older boys just seemed to melt away.

Mrs Power had been shopping with her three-year-old daughter and her two-year-old son. Mrs Power had been looking at sweatshirts; nearby, her two children turned their attention to the purses on display. She noticed the two boys, Bobby and Jon, kneeling there too, opening and closing purses as if playing with her children. When she had chosen a sweatshirt, Mrs Power went to collect her children. She overheard Jon say, 'Thommo, take one of these.' Bobby was still kneeling by the purses. Both froze as she approached and took her two children to the till. There was a queue at the till, and Mrs Power's children wandered off again. Mrs Power retrieved them again, and yet again they wandered off. The daughter reappeared on her own.

'Where's your brother?'

'Gone outside with the boys.'

Mrs Power checked the purse counter before going to the store entrance, where she saw her son, a few yards in front of her, walking towards Bobby and Jon. Jon stood by one of the Strand's mirrored posts, beckoning the lad to him. Mrs Power shouted, and he son stopped. 'Go back to your mum,' Jon said, and he went. While Mrs Power gave him a scolding, Jon and Bobby crossed into Mothercare. Camera 8 of the Strand's closed circuit television security system recorded them there, at 12.34.34.

## Written Comprehension – The Sleep of Reason – Chapter One

### A. Background information.

Author	
Title of the book	
Date of publication	

### B. Who are those characters? Use your own words. Give their age when possible.

Jon	
Bobby	
Nicola	
Miss Rigg	
Irene Slack	
Mrs Power	

#### Bobby and Jon...

- ... are playing truant.       ... are skipping classes.       ... are going to school.  
 ... are planning to steal things.       ... are loitering around.       ... wanted Ryan to skive off.

### C. What did Jon do with his school bag?

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### D. How would you describe Jon and Bobby? Use your own words. (No more than 50 words).

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