

Sample Translation

SMS

(SMS)

by Tjibbe Veldkamp

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Translated by Laura Watkinson

I. I get a text message

1

I was slumped on the sofa in the front room, squinting at the buttons on my mobile. I could just about make out the numbers and letters. We lived in semidarkness. My dad thought that two candles were enough for the room. And the curtains stayed closed. Spirits didn't like the light and we wanted Annabel's spirit to feel welcome here, didn't we? One of the candles was on the little table by the sofa, the other one was on the table in the backroom.

The phone beeped. It was a text. I could read that fine, because the screen of my mobile was illuminated.

i am here. anna.

I thought it was a bit of a vague message. Anna was a girl I'd met for the first time that afternoon. What did she mean by 'i am here'? And why had she texted that to me?

I texted her back:

wheres here? baz

Bobo, my little brother, flopped down next to me. He had the *Housewife's Helper* on his lap. A year ago he looked at that book for days on end, just like he does now, but with better light, because we were still allowed to have the lights on back then. One afternoon he gave me a list. His handwriting was really bad, so I asked him what the list said. '100 grams of butter, 150 grams of flour...' He read out the ingredients for Viennese apple strudel. He had taught himself to read and write, just by reading the *Housewife's Helper*. He was five at the time.

So, there was Bobo sitting beside me, all nice and cosy. I showed him the text message. Bobo leapt to his feet, the *Housewife's Helper* fell to the floor, he raced upstairs and two seconds later Door was standing in front of me, holding out his hand.

His name's Gerard, but everyone calls him Door. Maybe it's because he'd have made a good door, if he'd wanted to. He's so tall and wide that he just about fills the average doorway. Maybe it's also because he's about as intelligent as the average door. You'd have to ask the police about that. They're the ones who came up with that name for him.

So, Door wanted my mobile. When I didn't hand it over quickly enough, he snatched the thing out of my hand, giving me two penalty points. I'll explain that little game later. Door fell to his knees in front of the table. He read the text by the light of the candle. Then he and Bobo were leaping through the darkness, shouting 'She's here! She's here!' Door sat down on the floor and started crying. Bobo threw his arms around Door's neck and shouted 'So are we! So are we!' They both completely lost it. You should have seen them.

I waited for them to calm down for a moment.

'I'm sorry,' I said, 'but this message isn't from Mum. It's from a girl called Anna.'

My mum's name was Annabel, but we called her Anna. She's dead. I didn't think it was her who'd texted me. Door and Bobo clearly thought otherwise.

'Oh, come on,' I said. 'Since when have spirits been able to send text messages?'

Door was still sitting on the bare floorboards with Bobo on his shoulders. He wiped the tears from his eyes.

'Explain it to me then, will you?' I said. 'Imagine I'm a spirit and I want to send someone a quick text. How would I do that?'

'We knew she was looking for a way to contact us,' said Door. 'Now she's found one.'

I went into the backroom and sat down at the table, in the light of the other candle. Could there be any chance he was right after all? I never saw Annabel send a text when she was alive.

No, I said to myself. The text isn't from Mum.

Ever since Annabel died, Door had been trying to contact her spirit. It had never worked. That's why he was so ridiculously happy about the text. He'd been holding séances for a year now and all that time he'd been trying to sell us on the idea of spirits, souls, near-death experiences, the veneration of ancestors amongst the Chinese, and goodness knows what else. So by now I know how I feel about spirits. I couldn't say whether they really exist. You can make them up yourself of course, but that's something else. But whether or not spirits exist, they certainly can't interact with anything in our world. So they can't write on windowpanes, they can't control your hand when you're writing, they can't move a glass when your finger's on it – you name it, they can't do it. It's a great shame, but they really aren't able to do anything at all in our world. And that includes cutting through your car's brake cables, like I saw on TV once. And that means they can't text either. That's the whole point of dying. Not being able to do stuff anymore.

If spirits were able to do anything in our world, Annabel would have been in touch ages ago.

'Can we send an answer?' asked Door.

'Of course!' said Bobo.

'Why don't you ask her how old she is?' I said. 'I think she's thirteen. Maybe fourteen.'

'We'll tell her we love her,' said Door. 'Love brings a sense of peace.'

That was all I needed! In a minute that girl Anna would be getting a message to say we loved her. I didn't even know if I really liked her. She'd think I'd gone mental.

Door and Bobo sat down in my spot by the candle and hunched over my mobile.

‘If you press here once, you get an A,’ said Bobo. ‘And if you press twice, you get a B, got it?’

‘Like this?’

‘Yes.’

My dad. Now he was sitting there all cosy with Bobo and playing with my mobile, like a great dad, but in reality he just kept on letting us down. Every single day. You had to feel sorry for him, of course, with a dead wife, but we had a dead mum and a dad who’d left us in the lurch. Bobo and I had to get away, away from him and away from the darkness. I’d decided that this afternoon, even before I got the text. I was going to take care of it. That same evening.

I went into the dark of the hallway and rummaged through the coats on the hatstand until I got hold of my jacket. Each floor was allowed three candles – good spirits appear to have a bit of a thing for the number three. The living room had two candles and the kitchen had one, so the hallway and the loo had to do without.

I was already out in the jungle when I changed my mind. The jungle, that’s our back garden. I went back inside and back to the front room, where they were still fiddling around with my phone. I gave my dad one more chance. One last, absolutely final chance.

‘Door,’ I said. ‘Were you planning to go to that meeting with Bobo’s teacher?’

‘No arguments!’ said Bobo.

For once, I didn’t want any arguments either. I was really hoping that Door would look at his watch and go ‘What? Is it that time already? I’ve got to go!’ I was really hoping that he’d get his coat and stop at the door to say ‘Baz, would you make sure that Bobo gets to bed on time?’ He used to be able to do it, didn’t he? So why not now?

But Door didn’t look at his watch and he didn’t get his coat. He looked as though he didn’t really know what I was talking about.

‘That meeting with Bobo’s teacher, you know, the ten-minute meeting,’ I explained. ‘She’s going to tell you how he’s getting on at school. It’s in quarter of an hour.’

Now he had to know what I was on about. Door looked away and stared into the darkness. From where he was sitting you couldn’t make out whether the blackness in the corners of the backroom stopped at a curtain or a wall or just carried on into the infinite, dead universe. Maybe he was trying to come up with a way to get rid of me, just like I was trying to come up with a way to get rid of him.

‘You used to go in the old days,’ I said. In the old days he used to play football with me by the garages until it got so dark that we could hear the ball better than we could see it. In the old days he used to take me to the police station and we’d play Stratego in one of the cells. And in the really old days he used to make hand shadows on the wall above my bed, a policeman chasing a thief; Annabel said it was too scary, but I thought it was great.

‘No arguments!’ Bobo had stuck his fingers in his ears.

‘This is your last chance,’ I said.

Door pulled Bobo’s fingers out of his ears.

‘It’s his lack of faith,’ he said. ‘Shall we continue?’

I ran through the darkness. Although it’s not really what you’d call darkness. It doesn’t get dark outside, not in the city. If you think it’s dark outside, you probably don’t live in a house with nine candles – now that’s darkness, really dark, black black darkness, so dark that it doesn’t matter whether your eyes are open or closed. Outside you can always see a light somewhere. And if you look up, you can see that there’s light in the sky. Light from the streetlamps in the city; they’re lamps you can’t see, but they come together to chase away the worst of the darkness above the city.

The school looked like a big lamp itself, with all of that light shining out of the windows.

Bobo's teacher was standing in the doorway of the classroom. She was my teacher when I was in infants – the nicest teacher I've ever had. Which is why I'd chosen her now.

She looked to see whether there was anyone following me. When she didn't see anyone, she put out her hand to shake mine, but my Daily Score was already seven and there was no way I was going to make it eight, so I looked at the floor and pretended not to see her hand. It's a game I play. I call it Floating. There's actually just one rule: if someone touches me, I get a penalty point. Most days I keep it at zero. Today had been a bad day; to be precise, the very worst day since I'd started keeping my Daily Scores, a month or so before. I really didn't want any more penalty points.

She let her hand drop back down. They always do. If you just wait long enough.

'Come in!' she said.

She went over to the circle of children's chairs and sat down on one of them. I sat down as well. Too far away for her, I think, because she moved to another chair, which was closer to mine.

I moved to the next chair, further away from her. She stayed where she was.

'Nice to see you here, Baz,' she said.

I nodded.

'Couldn't Door come?'

Until then I'd always covered for my dad. I'd had enough opportunities to cause trouble for him. People asked questions. How's Door doing? Why are your curtains always shut? I'd never given anything away. But that had to change. It was time to be honest for once.

'He just wanted to send a text to my mum,' I said.

I could see her thinking: his mum? She's dead, isn't she?

'Your mum?' she asked.

I nodded.

'A text?'

I nodded again. This was more fun than I'd imagined.

'Have I got that right?' she said. 'Door isn't here now because he wanted to send your mum a text message?'

'He can feel her presence,' I explained. 'That means her spirit has remained earthbound, he says. He wants to know why and to tell her that she has to go into the Light. So he holds séances...'

I didn't make a fuss about it. I just gave her the facts. It was important not to make her feel sorry for me. The sorrier people feel for you, the more they try to touch you and the more penalty points you get. I was keeping a close eye on her hands. They were lying motionless on the notepad on her lap. When I'd finished talking, the ten minutes were up. She didn't say anything for a little while. Then she asked if I wanted her to talk to Door.

'I was thinking more about the child-abuse helpline,' I said. 'I've got the phone number with me.'

'Hey, hang on,' she said. 'There's plenty of time for that. I'd rather speak to Door myself first.'

That was fine by me. A minute with him and she'd see how disturbed he was. And then we could report him.

II. What happened before that

2

I'd stolen the mobile from Megamarket that afternoon. It was metallic red, with grey buttons. A life-size cardboard man wanted to give it to me. It was an advertising stunt. You were allowed to go into the shop and call anyone you wanted for free – as long as you told them that there were superfantastic offers at Megamarket.

As soon as I saw the mobile, I knew what I was going to steal. But first I had to warn Bobo.

It was Friday afternoon and pretty busy in the shop. Do you know Megamarket? There's a strange light throughout the shop. The ceiling's covered in rows of fluorescent tubes and they shine out the whitest light you can imagine. Apart from that, the shop's totally mega. They've got everything: trousers, teacakes, televisions, you name it. And five security guards.

I found Bobo in the frozen-food section, pushing a trolley around. He was holding his hands up in the air, because the handle was at the same height as his eyes. He's small for a boy of six, small and thin. I'd weighed him the week before: 18 kilos and 300 grams. If you ask me, that's less than a year ago, but I don't know for sure, because I didn't weigh him back then.

'Are you going to put it all back now?' I asked. In the few minutes I hadn't been keeping my eyes on him he'd half-filled the trolley.

'Can't we buy it?'

'No money.'

'Then we can steal it, can't we?'

I shook my head sternly, to show him I meant it. How did he think he was going to get all of that stuff out of the shop without being noticed?

'I want to steal something!' said Bobo in a loud voice. 'You're going to steal something. So why can't I steal something?'

People nearby were giving us funny looks. I looked around with a friendly smile and lowered my voice.

‘You gave Door a shopping list this morning, didn’t you?’

‘Hrm!’ Bobo had a special growl for when he didn’t like something. In this case, he had a point. It didn’t make much difference whether you gave Door a shopping list or not. Door didn’t think shopping lists were very important.

‘Maybe he’ll remember today,’ I said.

But that just had the effect of making Bobo all the more angry or upset or unhappy, or a combination of all three. He growled again, but more loudly this time, pulled open a freezer door, snatched something out of the freezer and hugged it stiffly to his chest, as though it was a teddy bear. He stared at the floor. I couldn’t see what he’d grabbed, but it came out of the deep-freeze, so it must have been pretty cold. I felt sorry for him. What he wanted, of course, was to make some recipe or other, and he was worried he wouldn’t have the right ingredients.

I put my hand on one of his hands. Bobo is the only one I don’t get penalty points for. When you’re six, there has to be someone to pick you up and swing you round now and then, someone you can lean on when you’re tired. Bobo had no one. Except for me.

I pulled one of his thin little fingers away from the frozen bag or packet or whatever it was. And then another finger. His whole hand. His other hand. Now I could see what he had there: oven chips. I put the bag back in the freezer. I took hold of Bobo’s hands and breathed on his fingers. I rubbed them warm. Not that they’d got really cold. But I wanted to make him feel better. I didn’t actually know what I wanted to make him feel better about. About everything. Our whole life.

‘Will you put the rest back yourself?’

He didn’t say anything, but he didn’t growl again either, so I assumed that he was going to do it.

‘I’ll see you in the usual place,’ I said.

I walked back to the cardboard man. There was a girl standing a little further along the aisle. She had long white hair and was wearing a long white coat. I remember thinking: she matches the light. But it was her hands that I noticed most. Her right hand picked up a leaflet and then put it straight back. Her left hand brushed the hair out of her face, as her right hand picked up a telephone package. Both hands were doing their own thing.

As though they're being controlled by two different spirits, I thought.

I instantly realised what a stupid thought that was. It was because of all that rubbish about spirits and souls at home. If you listen to that nonsense for long enough, you automatically start thinking the same way.

Maybe there was absolutely nothing weird about her hands. It was just that I normally paid a lot of attention to hands, because I played Floating. All of the penalty points I'd got had come from hands, except for that time I was knocked down by a skater in the corridor at school.

As I was standing there thinking all of those thoughts, the girl suddenly gave me a sideways look and said:

'Go on then. Just grab it.'

'Just grab what?'

She moved her eyes to look at the mobile and then looked back at me.

'That's what you want, isn't it?'

OK, she's on to me, I thought. But so what? The more people who see me shoplifting, the better.

Had I known what I would know half an hour later, I'd have walked away then. But I didn't know. I grabbed the mobile. Or rather, I reached out my hand to grab it, but it was stuck. I pulled harder and the cardboard man fell forward onto me and I had to let go of the mobile to catch him. I didn't know cardboard could be so heavy. I took a look around. No one was paying any attention to me; the girl was the only one looking at me with any interest. I pushed the cardboard man back into position and took a better look at the mobile. It was stuck on with a

piece of see-through plastic – what was that all about? Did the man want to hand the thing over or not? I pulled harder. Mr Cardboard wanted to fall over again, but this time I was prepared. With one hand I stopped him from falling. With my other hand I gave the mobile a tug. The plastic snapped and, bingo, the mobile was in my jacket pocket.

‘That went well,’ said the girl. ‘But you didn’t need to break anything. You could have just popped it out like this. Push, not pull.’

‘Next time you can do it,’ I said.

‘In a shop with security cameras? No thank you very much!’ Her left hand was stroking a box, as though she was trying to smooth some creases out of it. Her right hand was waving at an imaginary camera. ‘I think they saw you. I think they’re on their way to get you now.’

It was indeed time to go. I took another quick look at her hands – they were still moving. Clearly hands that were better avoided.

‘I’ll be off then,’ I said.

‘Yeah, quick, leg it,’ she said.

I ambled towards the exit. This bit was always exciting. I hadn’t gone ten metres before a security guard stepped out of a side aisle. He blocked my way.

‘Empty your pockets, please!’

I sprinted back, and had already made it around the corner to the right before he shouted for me to stop. He came after me, I could hear him stomping along, but there’s no security guard who can outrun me. I’d already shaken him off. A customer tried to stop me. One feint and I got past. Ha! I zigzagged down the aisles. Left! Right! I stopped to listen. Running footsteps. Agitated voices.

‘Where is he?’

‘In dairy produce!’

That’s what you think! I was already past dairy. I love running. I often go for really long runs outside, just for fun. This was different, more obstacles, not many straight sections, but running’s still running.

‘There he is!’ A woman was standing in the middle of the aisle. She was jabbing a forefinger in my direction. I sprinted right for her. She couldn’t get out of the way quickly enough.

Megamarket was wide awake now.

‘A thief!’ rang the cry through the shop. ‘Where is he, there he goes, where is he, there he is, a thief!’

I dodged hands, dived away, pushed over a pile of boxes and ran, ran, ran. A shop full of people and no one touched me. I was untouchable. I was a spirit! How many people were chasing after me? Ten? Twenty? So what if there were a hundred of them! A blockage, quick backtrack, oops, there was that security guard again. I shot into a side aisle, took the up escalator four steps at a time, sprinted over the entire length of the shop to the stairs, was down in four leaps, ran along the last aisle all the way to the front of the shop and reached the exit. Made it!

I stopped and turned around. There was one thing I didn’t understand. Megamarket had two exits. Why didn’t they put two security guards by each exit? Then no shoplifters would get away. The fifth security guard could collar everyone in his own sweet time. But no. The gentlemen insisted on stomping through the shop all together. But fine, it was their choice. Here came the first one – about time too. I dodged his arms and then ducked out of the way of guard number two. Number three grabbed me by the shoulders and wrestled me to the floor. With difficulty, I wriggled my wrist up in front of my face. It was 15.12. I’d got my first penalty point of the day.

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The security guard put his knee in my back. That didn't count as an extra penalty point, because it was still the same guard. The knee disappeared, but then a hand grabbed hold of my upper arm, pulled me to my feet and didn't let go. That brought my Running Daily Score to two. The hand belonged to another security guard. There I stood, in the white light, in full view of the public. People had formed a wide circle around us.

I felt sad. Not because I'd been caught or because of all the rubberneckers or anything; they could think what they liked. It was because of that hand around my upper arm. I often get that. Someone touches me and the sadness suddenly pops up, as though it's secretly been waiting for the opportunity. That's why I play Floating. I've had enough sadness. I don't feel like being sad anymore.

'Could you please let me go?' I asked the security guard. 'I'm really not going to run off.'

'I can't,' he said quietly. 'People are watching.'

I could understand that. He was the security guard, who was to be taken seriously. I was the little thief, who was not to escape punishment. But I'd had enough! Enough of being wrestled to the floor, enough of being grabbed hold of, enough of being made sad! I was going to stop. This had been my last shoplifting expedition. That thought made me forget the hand around my arm, so I kept repeating it. I'm giving it up! I'm going to stop!

The policeman we were waiting for finally arrived. He'd arrested me before. He was called Jan or Johan.

'What's going on here?'

The policeman and the security guard talked to each other. It was the same old story: shoplifter, teach him a lesson, down the station. I was only half listening. I was looking in the crowd for the girl with the restless hands. I didn't see her, but I

did see Statler and Waldorf, the two old men who lived next door to us. They wore checked caps and were at least eighty years old.

The security guard let me go. PC Jan or Johan grabbed me by the other arm. Running Daily Score: 3. I could still feel the sadness waiting there, ready to get bigger, but I told myself this was absolutely the last time I was going to be arrested. That cheered me up a bit. Jan or Johan took me away. People stood aside to let us through.

We walked in silence to the doors of the shopping centre. A few children followed us and shouted out stuff, but I didn't listen to them. The sliding doors slid open and we walked out into the drizzle. It was already starting to get dark and the sky was one big black-and-grey cloud. The children stayed inside.

The police car was parked half on the pavement. PC Jan or Johan opened the back door and let go of my arm. Free! Finally! I got in. At the wheel was a policeman called Mick. He took a look at me in the rear-view mirror.

'You here again?'

Jan or Johan had walked around the car and slid in beside me on the back seat.

'How's your dad doing?' he asked.

'OK.' Of course I should have said: 'Badly.' Or: 'Crazier by the day.' But he was still my dad. I wasn't going to betray him. I never had. Not yet anyway.

The policemen gave each other a look. They'd probably heard a completely different story. Door hadn't been to work for ages, but as far as I knew he was still officially in the police. Occasionally someone would come round, but I hadn't seen anyone for a while.

'Where d'you want us to drop you off?' asked Mick.

'Just drop me at the car park,' I said.

'Isn't that too close?'

'I'll put my hood up.'

We drove around the shopping centre, took a right, then another right, and stopped at the entrance to the car park. I was already out in the drizzle before the car had come to a complete stop.

‘Say hi to your dad!’ called Jan or Johan.

I slammed the car door and raised my hand. The car drove off. Saying hi to Dad was going to be tricky. Since our argument about the electricity, Door and I weren’t talking to each other. I pulled up my hood and walked over to the three silver-coloured containers in the middle of the car park.

This time, Bobo wasn’t sitting on them yet; I could see that from a distance. I walked around the containers. He hadn’t hidden behind them either. I opened and closed the heavy metal lids, one by one. They felt cold and wet; it had probably been drizzling for some time. No Bobo.

‘Bobo!’ I yelled in every direction. ‘Bo-bo! Bo-bo!’

No answer. I ran around the whole car park to see if he was sitting behind any of the cars. He wasn’t. Where had the boy got to? Had he actually tried to steal all of that shopping? Had he been caught?

Megamarket’s back entrance goes into the car park. I banged on the door. A tall boy opened it. He picked up two bags of shopping that were waiting for me and went to hand them over. I didn’t take them from him. Floating tip number one: never take hold of anything. That’s asking for penalty points. The boy held the bags up for a little longer, but when he saw I really wasn’t going to take them from him, he put them down in front of me.

We had an agreement, Megamarket and I. I stole stuff, got caught and carted off while everyone watched. It was all playacting. If people saw that you might get caught, they’d be less keen to steal something themselves. At least that was the idea. In exchange, they gave me shopping. Usually food they couldn’t sell anymore, because the best-before date had passed. Useful to have in the house on days when Door forgot to do the shopping.

‘Did anyone get caught after me?’ I asked.

The boy shook his head. He went to shut the door, but I quickly slipped my foot in the way.

‘Could you just ask inside?’ I asked. ‘A six-year-old boy. He’s called Bobo.’

The tall boy gave me a grumpy look, but still disappeared inside to look. I listened to see if I could hear an ambulance siren. Here came the boy again.

‘No one got caught. Just you.’

And he closed the door. I took a bag in each hand and walked back to the containers. I put the bags on the middle one and hoisted myself up onto it. I stood up so that I could see further. At the other end of the car park someone was loading shopping into the boot of their car. A woman was scooting a trolley back to the shopping centre. Otherwise the car park was deserted. Wet, gloomy and deserted.

He’ll be back in a minute, I told myself. He’s sitting in a dry spot somewhere, reading the Housewife’s Helper and he’s forgotten what time it is.

But he didn’t come. My stomach was screwing up with worry. Bobo was too small to walk through the darkness on his own. This wasn’t the nicest of neighbourhoods. You saw fewer tramps and junkies here nowadays, but that was because they’d been chased out of the area by big-time criminals who weren’t all that much older than me. And this was the time of day when the spirits began to stir – according to Door. You didn’t just have good spirits, but bad ones too. Demons. I saw a grey shadow duck behind an estate car. A patch of darkness under a delivery van suddenly dissolved.

Hey, stop it, I said to myself. If demons do exist, and that’s debatable, then they can’t do anything. If good spirits can’t interact with anything in our world, then demons can’t either.

To distract myself, I looked to see what was in the bags. A quick glance revealed the usual cartons of milk, crackers, a can of soup, three packets of Tuscan sauce mix, and even some biscuits for Bobo to take to school. If Bobo had been there, it would have been quite a celebration.

I stood up again and looked out over the car park. It really was raining now and the wind was doing its best to blow me off the container. I placed my feet further apart so I could brace myself a bit better and I leant into the wind. The streetlamps around the edge of the car park flickered on. In the distance two

people walked past, huddled beneath an umbrella, which the wind was tugging at. A cyclist with no lights rode through a puddle. The darkness grew thicker.

I stared at the estate car. I couldn't see the shadow that had been there before. But now one of the spindly trees that were planted in a neat row along the car park caught my attention. It seemed as though its bare branches were moving backwards and forwards much more wildly than those of the other trees.

As though an invisible somebody was shaking it, I thought.

I jumped down to the ground. I hid the bag amongst the containers, under some wet cardboard. I started running.

I was in the phone booth in the post office. I'd put a fifty-cent coin in the slot, but was still holding on to it. I took a few deep breaths. Then I let go of the money.

'Hello. Gerard here.'

I held the telephone a little further away from my ear. There are a lot of things you can say about my dad, but not that he's a quiet talker.

'It's Baz. Is Bobo with you?' He must have thought it was odd that I was phoning him now, after we'd not spoken to each other for so long. But if that was the case, he didn't let on.

'No, why?'

'I've lost him.'

Door said nothing. I said nothing. Door said nothing. How long do you get on the phone for fifty cents? Must be quite a while.

'He'll turn up. He's seven.'

'Six.'

Door sighed. 'What does it matter? He'll show up. I'm hanging up now.'

'Why?' I could guess the answer, but I wanted him to say it.

'I'm having a séance,' he said.

Yet again.

'Baz?'

I could have said that he really had to help me look for Bobo. I could have said that it was getting dark and that the demons were beginning to stir. I could have said that they were shaking the branches and that I could hear them laughing, above the sound of the rain. I could have said whatever I wanted, but there was absolutely no point, because Door was having a séance.

‘Baz?’

We’d said all there was to say.

Door hung up. I listened to the beeps of the phone for a moment. Then I hung up too.

I ran back to the rubbish containers, through the pouring rain, because by now it was really bucketing down.

Bobo still wasn’t there.

He’s all I’ve got. I know that sounds stupid. Everyone at school can’t stand their little brothers. They wreck your Gameboy, dribble all over your CDs and are so rubbish at football that they’re only good for goalposts. But all the people who say that are loaded with family members: dads, mums, uncles, aunts, granddads, great-aunts, second cousins, and who knows what else they’ve got. Me, I’ve got Bobo.