

Raised in the Air

I'm standing in the kitchen half-listening to mum. She is on her usual rant about homework and the mess in my bedroom. We've had dinner and I'm drying the dishes. I open the cutlery drawer and stare down at mum's large bread knife. It lies in a solitary position on its side and I look at the serrated edge. The sun is still shining through the kitchen window and the knife glistens. It has a black handle with little studs embedded in the shaft which make a good grip in my large hand.

My heart starts to race. The knife is perfect for cutting bread, but could it be as effective if pushed into someone's skin and flesh? The palms of my hands feel clammy as I pick the knife out of the drawer and grip it firmly. I'm not sure what type of wound the jagged edge will make in the skin, and I wonder if there be as much blood as when Kyle was stabbed.

That day will be etched in my mind forever. I still dream about the blood. The gaping wound in his white school shirt and all the blood that ran out along the path and dripped down into a pool in the gutter. It looked hot and sticky and was bright red. In my dreams Kyle's eyes are wide open but they are full of blood. It runs down his cheeks and I usually jerk awake from the nightmare shaking and crying.

Sweat stands on my forehead now and I wipe it away with the sleeve of my T-shirt. Maybe if I used a knife with a smooth cutting edge then it would be harder for the police to trace?

I twirl the handle around in my hand wondering how deep you need to push it inside someone to cause a serious injury. And, of course, how do I carry it to school? It's too big to fit into my backpack. I know once I get it there, I can stash it in my locker until home time which is when I need it. That's when the gang have started following me home.

'Ryan!'

Mum is shouting from the lounge and I drop the knife back into the drawer with a clatter and hurry through to her. The tube from her nasal prongs to the oxygen cylinder has caught under the edge of
okay, Mum, you'
eyes.

This is not the complete story. To read further, please either
register as a new reader or login now if already registered

The doctor told
had poo-poo'd the comment. 'Don't worry, you big, lummox,' she'd said. 'Doctors always paint a black picture. If the worst happens, they've covered their backs and if their patient gets better – it's happy days all around.'

But I wasn't sure because mum doesn't look as well as she used to. Her usual pink cheeks are always pale now, and she can't do as much without gasping for breath.

I'd gone to bed that night wondering what the worst was? And had they both meant that mum was going to die soon. I'd squeezed my eyes tight shut to stop the tears. I'd not been able to bear the thought of her leaving me. We'd been just us two since I was born. Apparently, my father had scarpered the day mum told him she was expecting me. He was from Nigeria, so he had probably gone back home. I'd choked back sobs and decided that if I let the gang do their worst and didn't fight back then I'd die before her and I wouldn't be alone.

Now, I help mum get ready for bed as she puffs and pants pulling her dressing gown over her shoulder.

'Thanks, sweetie,' she says. 'I don't know what I'd do without you.'

She's always called me, sweetie. Well, for as long as I can remember. I'd once told her, that at fifteen I was too old for the pet name. But, I bite my lip knowing I might not hear her soft voice for much longer.

I dig around in the bottom of my wardrobe for my old backpack which I know is bigger than the new one mum bought me for Christmas. Later, when I know she is asleep, I creep back into the kitchen and wrap the knife in a towel which fits snugly into my bag.