

Sighting

1974, 1976, 1985, 1992, 2004, 2009, 1974, and so on. In a round, like a disc.

There are UFOs everywhere, all through history and your life, flocks of them without wings, desperate, pulsating and flung through the galaxies. Look up there, in the '50s, stuck in comics, long before they landed on TV, before they learnt to whizz and whoosh through an aerial. They escaped those comic pages and took off again, flying through magazines, books, dreams and into the '70s, winking their red and green lights. Look in that porthole, check out the alien in there, his white knuckles on the wheel, swinging his craft low to the ground then back into the sawn-off sky. And look at that other one – *crazy* – he's wrapped himself around a telephone pole, screwed himself up small and disappeared into the light bulb! Wait, wait, I don't know what he's doing in there, but – *wow*, hang on tight, he's out of there again! He's a whooshing, whizzing insect, a fly or a bug, or he might be a thought. An angry buzzing alien thought, looking for somewhere to land.

You don't know when it happens, but you must be a very naughty boy. How naughty you are. Stop being so naughty. Stop it. Stop it now. Ten seconds later, thirty-five years later. Sometime later. You must stop. Stop being so naughty. You must be ever so naughty because here he comes; it's your father. Look at him: he's got on his patterned work tie and short-sleeve shirt. He's going to work. But he's putting his briefcase on the kitchen floor, a chess piece on the black and white chequered lino. And, look now, he's picking up the knife from the middle of the breakfast table or the drawer. It's in his hands, his shaking hands, and look how the blade shakes and shines, too. It's very shiny. Look at your father's eyes. They're shiny. What's he doing? You must know how naughty you are. Your father is raising the knife and he's telling you now, ten seconds later, thirty-five years afterwards, you are a very bad boy. So bad, *how* bad? So bad he's saying he's going to kill you if you don't shut up.

He's going to kill you and your brothers.

Look at his eyes.

You know he's going to kill you.

They're very shiny eyes.

But it's okay. Because you're not there anymore. And neither are your two brothers. You've all shrunk. You've melted into your seats and through the floor and under the house and you're never coming back.

But you're back.

And your father is still standing in front of you, his jaw shaking.

You're still there *and* beneath the ground; you're heading down to the earth's hot core, it's getting hotter, and your Dad and his knife are shaking. But you're not there, never again.

Do you hear me, son? Never again.

You must know how naughty you are. So naughty you're still at the table, ten seconds later, thirty-five years ago.

And your father has gone to work.

Your family moves from Ballarat to the Gippsland town of Korumburra. But you liked Ballarat. It was a nice place. Spider webs grew in the back garden, all across the azaleas, and the other big pom-pom flowers, blue and white. You won a t-shirt with Mickey Mouse on it. A Tip Top bread competition. You were supposed to win and go to Disneyland. But you got a *consolation* prize. Your t-shirt. You wore it, proud and smiling at your nice neighbour lady and her curly hair, and you still thought you were going to Disneyland. Instead, you started prep at Lake Wendouree Primary School in Ballarat, and your Mum left you crying at the gate because she couldn't come in, mothers didn't come in, and it was so hot in the classroom you sweated up your thighs and shorts. Little ponds formed on your plastic seat. So thirsty, you went for the drink bottle your Mum had left you.

'You don't have your drink til recess, Peter! Leave it alone!'

Despite the heat you shook and shivered. How did the teacher see you? How did she know your name? She was so far away. She was at the blackboard. But now everyone was looking at you. And your drink bottle. And you put it back and cried

and someone laughed. And this was school. And you didn't want to go to school all term, but you did. And you go again, for one day, when your family moves to Korumburra. You sit with the other kids in a ring in front of a guitar lady; longhaired, her skirt of rainbows whooshing around the room. She sings and smiles and says your name, but you're not going back to school.

You start again in Grade One.

You're a smart boy. You must be. Because you learn fast. You learn that footy cards are what you need to make friends. Luckily, your Mum sends you each morning on your bike to buy bread at the milkbar, and she lets you use the change to buy a packet of footy cards. The more swaps you make the more friends you'll have, so at the counter you hold *two* footy card packs close together and pay for only one. Because of this, it must be, you score two Leigh Matthews. Lethal Leigh is the hardest card to get. Boys mob you at recess under the old elm and you swap a Matthews for a Rene Kink, a Billy Picken and two Peter Moores. You don't need both Peter Moores, but you take them anyway because Darren is a nice boy, he doesn't tread on your toes in the crush and he believes in UFOs.