

# One

Theo thought the minotaur packed a powerful punch, but it seemed that windows did too. He'd been half-asleep at the back of the minibus when the vehicle lurched to the side, sending his head **swaying away** from the glass before throwing it back onto it. Now he was fully awake and rubbing the side of his head, hoping that none of the other kids on the minibus had seen it happen.

**Commented [1]:**  
word choice?

'Welcome to the countryside, where the roads have more holes than the plot of a superhero movie,' laughed **the youth leader called Daniel** from the driver's seat.

**Commented [2]:**  
Daniel, the youth leader,

Beary-eyed, Theo looked out of the offending window. Before he'd dropped off, all he could see were cars, caravans and endless tarmac. Now it had all been replaced by green fields, trees, stone walls, and mountains. After hours of driving and two stops for the toilet and snacks, they were finally in the Lake District.

Out of all the twelve years Theo had been alive, this was the first time he'd spent his summer holiday in England. His mother, Dr Elizabeth Harpe, a famous archaeologist, usually jetted them off to some foreign land to dig up ancient bits of pottery and **occasional** amazing historical secrets.

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occasionally?

Last year they had gone to Cyprus, but this year Mum was staying at home to conduct research at the university. As this meant that Theo would be at home with his grandparents for the whole six weeks, she decided he needed something to do. That turned out to be a five-day activity break, which included, canoeing, rock-climbing, and other stuff she insisted would be 'cool'.

After the adventures of last summer, Theo wasn't sure quite how these activities would compare in terms of thrills or 'coolness', so he came up with a different suggestion.

'Why don't I fly out to Cyprus and spend the holiday with Pappou,' he said.

'I don't think that's a good idea. Your grandfather is getting very old, I can't expect him to look after you,' was all Mum said on the subject. **At first,**

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delete

Theo tried not to think about the argument that followed and turned his attention back inside the minibus. **So far, the other two youth leaders, Amanda and Hector, who were sitting in the front with Daniel, seemed quite friendly.**

**Commented [5]:**  
This sounds a bit random - I think you need to expand it slightly - Presume he's thinking about this in the context of his expectations of the trip?

A tortured, grinding sound came from the front of the minibus as it turned off the road they were following and onto one that looked like it had been forgotten for years. The battered, old vehicle struggled up the steep, winding track, past trees, overgrown hedgerows and wooden gates.

Without warning, Theo was pitched forward as the minibus skidded on the road's **worn out** surface. All the other kids onboard suddenly cried out, either in fear or cheering at the much-needed excitement.

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hyphen

'Sorry about that, everyone,' Daniel called. The gears crunched again, and the bus was filled with an annoying beeping as it began to reverse back down the road.

Theo looked down the length of the minibus, past the other kids and out the windscreen, to see what was going on. A tractor was coming the other way and the road was only wide enough to allow one vehicle down it at a time.

'Why doesn't *he* go back?' called the boy sitting on the opposite side of the aisle from Theo. He swept his long, floppy fringe back out of his eyes. It must have been dislodged by the sudden braking.

'Because, Kian, he would have to go uphill,' Daniel called back.

Theo wasn't convinced going down it would be that easy either. He turned and looked out the rear window behind him. Ten metres back, the road was a little wider. If Daniel reversed into it, the tractor *should* be able to get past.

'Theo, Kian, move your heads, I can't see where I'm going,' Daniel called.

'Sounds about right, bigheads,' laughed a girl from the seat in front of Theo.

'Very funny, Mia,' Kian replied. 'Perhaps we have big heads because we have a *brain* in ours.'

Kian and Mia were the only two people on the minibus that Theo had met before. Kian was in some of his classes at school, but they never really spoke to each other.

Mia had only started at Manor Park Comp a few weeks before the holiday, but she'd already gained a reputation. She was different and liked everyone to know it. While everyone else was wearing walking gear and waterproofs, Mia was wearing Doctor Marten boots with tartan trousers. She wore a pink top with a unicorn on it. The mythological creature was sticking its tongue out and farting rainbows. Around her wrist, she wore a chunky gold bracelet. Theo assumed it wasn't as expensive as it looked.

The other five kids on board came from the schools on the other side of town. Theo had heard the names, Alfie, Lola and Oskar, but he didn't have a clue what the names of the other two girls were. They were all eleven or twelve apart from Lola who was nine. Aside from saying some muted hellos when everyone got on board, he had found out nothing about them.

Except for Lola. She had spent the first part of the journey being way too enthusiastic and talking about unicorns. She had tried to talk to Mia about her t-shirt, but the older girl ignored her. Theo felt sorry for the younger girl. She didn't deserve what Mia had said to her.

The minibus stopped reversing and a moment later the tractor rumbled past, mud flicking up from its rear tyres. As soon as it squeezed past, they started moving again. Luckily, they didn't meet any more vehicles. As they continued on their way up the winding, steepening road, tree branches and brambles whipped at the windows. The vehicle slowed as Daniel took them around a corner that was so sharp that Theo was convinced they were going to scrape the minibus on the stone wall at the side of the road.

'Okay, everyone, one more corner and we're there,' Amanda called over the back of her seat. In case she didn't sound excited enough she wore a huge, exaggerated smile.

Everyone started to grab their packs, but Lola threw herself at the window. 'It's beautiful,' she cried.

When Theo's mother had told him he'd be staying in an old barn, he'd imagined a drafty, wooden structure with piles of straw to sleep on. What he saw was nothing like he'd pictured. The stone building was three storeys high with tiny windows set into thick walls.

Daniel swung the steering wheel around and the minibus rolled onto the gravel drive. The crunching stopped when the bus came to a halt.

'Right,' Daniel called, turning off the engine and looking back over his seat. 'You'll find your rooms upstairs. There's enough for one room each. Four of you are on the top floor, and four on the first.'

'Can we choose?' Mia called.

'Yes, but if you make bad choices, we may have to move you. You've only got half an hour to unpack, then we'll eat, and then we'll get ready for our first activity.'

'Cool,' said Kian. 'What is it? Archery. Tell me it's archery.'

'No, horse riding. I can pretend it's a unicorn,' Lola said, looking hopefully at Mia. The older girl turned away.

'No. You'll need your boots, we're going for a walk.'

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repeated tag

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thought she ignored her? :)

The minibus filled with the sound of one large, collective groan.



An hour later, the group of eight children and three adults left the holiday home. With Daniel at the front, they followed the winding road further up the hill until they came to a dry, packed-earth footpath in a gap in an overgrown hedge. They followed it, walking past lush trees filled with singing birds. Twenty minutes later, the path met up with a slow-moving river a little wider than the single-track road they had driven up.

They continued walking, the path getting steeper all the time. Amanda urged everyone on from the rear, until her voice and the sound of singing birds was replaced by crashing water as the river grew faster and fiercer.

The slope became so steep that soon the path had sections of steps created from large pieces of stone. At the beginning of the **hike** everyone had talked and messed around, but as it got harder **and everyone breathed heavier**, everyone grew quieter. Now all Theo could hear was the ragged breath of the people around him. He was pleased to notice that even Alfie, who, he'd found out, played for the local youth football team, seemed to be finding it hard. Kian's long fringe hung limp and damp in front of his eyes. **Lola, being much younger, and smaller, found it the greater challenge and even her seemingly limitless energy began to be eaten away.**

'What's that noise?' Mia said, her **Dr Marten** boots landing heavily on the steps, **crushing a snail** beneath them.

'It's a waterfall,' Amanda answered.

'Nice,' Lola said. 'I've never seen a real one before.'

'Is it big?' asked Kian.

'You'll find out in about two minutes,' Daniel said.

'We've still got that far to go?' Ali said, his face betraying his disappointment.

'It sounds really close, though,' said Oskar.

'It *is* close, Oskar,' said Amanda, 'but the climbing gets a bit harder around this next bend in the path. I'll take the lead for a while. Daniel, you can keep an eye on the stragglers.'

Theo hung back, letting Amanda, Hector and the other seven children go past.

'Come on, Theo. Keep moving,' Daniel said.

'I'm just going to grab a drink.' Theo slipped off his backpack. 'I'll catch you up.'

'I shouldn't really leave you, but I think I can trust you,' Daniel said, smiling. 'Don't let me down.'

'Of course not,' Theo answered, unscrewing the lid of his water bottle and taking a big swallow. |

He was just wondering why his mum had sent him on this terrible holiday when piercing screams came from above.

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comma

**Commented [10]:**  
delete

**Commented [11]:**  
Suggest 'Even Lola's seemingly limitless energy was being eaten away.'

**Commented [12]:**  
Is it more natural to call them 'Doc Marten boots' or 'Doc Martens'? I'm not sure what the kids are saying these days lol.

**Commented [13]:**  
POV?

**Commented [14]:**  
say that Daniel goes on ahead

