

HERO

When the shot was fired, Kofi hit the floor. He knew instinctively to do that. Although he'd never heard gunfire before, never even handled a gun, he knew to drop to the floor.

He wasn't sure, but he thought he heard the police sirens even before the gunshot. Or maybe at exactly the same time. Either way, both sounds finally pushed Kofi over the edge. His mind was so confused it was hard to make sense of any of the sounds around him. Everything seemed muffled, as if his ears were failing him.

He had to get out of there.

Kofi watched from between the cars where he was hiding. He could see other shoppers running

for cover, or hiding, like him, children clustered around their legs. Children crying loud and long. He caught one man's face. It was trembling with fear.

And it was like looking in a mirror. Because that was just how Kofi felt.

Kofi lifted his head to see where the gunmen were. They were not at the container. They were not running away. He lifted his head some more.

And there they were. Crouched by their car. Hiding like everyone else.

When the police car drew up, Kofi felt the urge to run. Just to get away from this hell. He should have done it before coming here, before he decided to help Danny. He should have been selfish then.

So now he *would* be selfish.

Get away from here.

Avoid the police, who would send him to prison for being in the country without a job. Especially the van filled with police officers that had stopped on the edge of the car park, away from the first police car.

So he turned to go. Back through the car park. To London. He could disappear in London. He didn't know where it was. Except he had seen a road sign, 'London 207 miles', from one of the motorway bridges he'd walked over.

That was a start.

As he walked he felt like he was in a dream. He didn't think for a minute about Danny, about the gunmen, the police. He didn't think, full stop. He just walked. It was the only way he could cope with his fear and anxiety and panic.

No thinking.

No thoughts.

That was the answer to this.

Then he stopped.

There was one thought he could not ignore.

He turned back to see the scene in the car park.

The police were talking to people now. A group of them. And the group included the two gunmen, who were casually leaning on their car, pretending they had nothing to do with the shooting.

Kofi looked at the container. It was still shut. With everyone in it.

And he realized that he just couldn't let this happen.

He would not be able to live with himself.

He turned and walked up to the police van.

Each step was almost impossible. He had to fight himself not to run away. Because he knew he was putting himself in their hands now. He would be arrested too, whether they got the two gunmen or not. He knew it.

And then there was his fear. The panic still running through him like the traffic on the motorway a few metres away.

He was about to tell the police that the two men they were talking to were armed and ready to kill.

Anything could happen.

Nobody had spoken for over a minute when the door began to open. And a minute is a long time when you are hopelessly trapped in the dark with no idea of what might happen next.

The light was blinding for all of them this time. And in front of them stood three silhouettes.

What is this? Danny wondered. *Have they come to finish the job?* They'd killed Kofi. Now they had four people trapped in an oversized tin can, it would be so easy to step inside, shut the door and execute every one of them.

Danny braced himself. He didn't have time to talk to the others. But he was going to charge, at least try and save the rest of them, even if it cost him.

He didn't think he was being brave. He just thought he had no other option.

As he charged at the opening door, Danny's eyes adjusted quickly to see two policemen and another figure.

Kofi.

Standing up.

Kofi.

Alive and well.

Danny slowed, then sank to his knees,
overcome by his adrenalin.

It was OK.

Everything was going to be OK.