

CAMBRIDGE

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Margaret Johnson
Excerpt
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CAMBRIDGE



Cambridge
Discovery
Readers

Running Wild

Margaret Johnson



People in the story

Luke Robinson: a fourteen-year-old boy

Alex Brown: also fourteen; Luke's neighbour

Jet: a black panther

Mrs Robinson: Luke's mother

Mrs Brown: Alex's mother

Mr Clark: one of Luke's teachers

BEFORE YOU READ



- 1 Look at 'People in the story' and the pictures in the first two chapters. Answer the question.
Which characters are in these first two chapters?
-

Chapter 1

The phone



It was a grey Sunday afternoon and I was walking home from the shops with my neighbour Alex. Alex had a big stick and he was hitting garden walls with it. The stick made a THWACK sound when it hit the walls.

‘It’s so boring around here,’ Alex said. THWACK! ‘Nothing ever happens.’ THWACK!

‘It’s the holidays soon,’ I said.

‘So what?’ Alex said. ‘Holidays are boring too.’ He threw the stick into the air as hard as he could. When it came down, it hit a car outside someone’s house.

There was a man inside the car.

‘Hey!’ he shouted through the open window.

Alex laughed. The man began to open the car door. ‘Come here!’ he shouted at Alex.

‘Why should I?’ Alex said.

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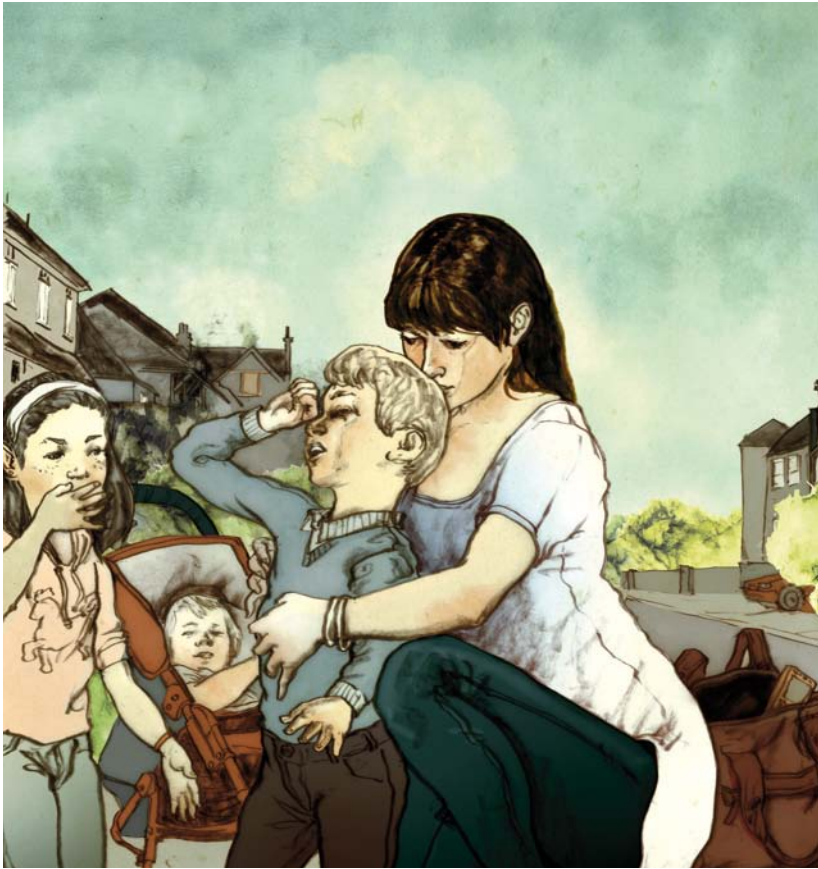
I looked at the man. He was getting out of the car now and he was big as well as angry.

‘Let’s go,’ I said to Alex.

The man began to move towards Alex. We started to run, with Alex laughing all the way. When it was safe to stop, we sat on a wall for a rest. Alex was still laughing.

‘Did you see the size of him?’ he asked. ‘Fat pig.’

A woman came towards us. She had two young children and a baby. Suddenly one of the children fell over. He began to scream loudly.



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‘Oh, Jack!’ the woman said. She sounded tired. ‘Wait there,’ she said to the other child. Then she put her bag down on the ground so she could help the little boy up.

‘Come on, Jack,’ she said. ‘You’re all right.’

Alex got down from the wall. He looked at me quickly. I started to get down from the wall. Then Alex began to run over to the woman and her children. I thought he was going to help them or something, but he didn’t. He reached into the woman’s bag and took something out.

The woman turned round and saw him.

‘My phone!’ she shouted. ‘They’ve taken my phone!’

Alex looked at me. ‘Come on!’ he said. ‘Run!’

I could run faster than Alex. Soon I was in front of him. I saw a building ahead; it was the public toilets. I turned away from the street and ran behind the toilet building.

‘Luke?’ Alex called, following me. ‘What have you come down here for?’ His face was red. He looked as hot as I felt.

‘To hide,’ I said.

‘It smells,’ he said.



I didn't answer. I didn't like the smell either. I could think of lots of places I would rather be, like at home waiting for Mum to get back from work. Even school would be better than this, though I'd never tell Alex that. Alex hated school and thought anyone who liked it was mad.

I still couldn't believe what Alex had done.

'Wasn't that great?' he laughed now, his face alive as he remembered.

'Shh!' I said. 'I can hear someone coming.'

Alex gave me a cross look. His face could change so quickly. Light to dark. Sun to rain.

'It won't be *her*, Luke,' he said. 'She couldn't run after us with all those kids to look after.' He stood up. 'Come on. Let's get out of here. It smells awful.' And he began to walk down the side of the toilet building towards the street.

I followed him slowly. I thought we should hide for longer. The woman might tell the police. When I got out to the street, Alex was playing with the woman's phone, trying to make it work. He had forgotten about the smell from the toilets.

'Stupid thing!' Alex said, looking down at the phone.

I put my hands in my pockets and stood by the toilet entrance, waiting for him. I couldn't get the woman's face out of my head. I felt sorry for her. I was worried too. She said '*they've*' taken my phone. I couldn't stop and say 'I didn't take it! It wasn't me!' So I had to run and hide with Alex. What if we saw the woman again? Or if she told the police what we looked like?

'Why won't it work?' Alex was saying angrily now.

If the phone didn't start working soon, he would probably throw it into the road. He used to get angry and throw his toys across the room when we were young children. 'He hasn't changed much,' I thought.

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‘Maybe it hasn’t got any credit left,’ I said. Mum’s phone often runs out of credit. Then she has to wait until she gets paid before she can buy some and use her phone again.

Alex didn’t look up. I wasn’t sure if he’d heard me or not. It was raining now and I just wanted to go home. I wished Alex didn’t live next door to me. But it was better to be Alex’s friend. I’d seen what he was like to people who weren’t his friends.

Suddenly it began to rain harder. Alex pushed the phone into his pocket.

‘Come on,’ he said to me angrily, as if the bad weather and the phone not working were all my fault.

And at last we began to walk towards home.

LOOKING BACK

- 1 Check your answer to *Before you read* on page 4.

ACTIVITIES

- 2 Complete the sentences with the names in the box.

Luke (x2)	Alex (x4)	Jet (x2)
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- Luke tells the story in Chapter 1.
 - is bored with life.
 - wants to be free.
 - doesn't like school.
 - is very strong and dangerous.
 - gets angry very easily.
 - enjoys doing bad things.
 - doesn't like trouble.
- 3 Underline the correct words in each sentence.
- The woman with the phone has got two / three children.
 - The boy begins to cry because he falls over / Alex steals the phone.
 - Luke thinks that Alex is going to steal the mother's phone / help the mother.
 - Alex / Luke runs faster than his friend.
 - Luke is / isn't happy that Alex stole the phone.
 - Alex is the same as / different from when he was a child.
 - Jet often dreams about light / her next meal.
 - This is / isn't the first time Jet has killed.
 - The man lives with his family / on his own.

4 What do the underlined words refer to in these lines from the text?

- 1 'Did you see the size of him?' (page 6) *the man in the car*
- 2 'They've taken my phone!' (page 7)
- 3 'It won't be her, Luke,' he said. (page 8)
- 4 'Why won't it work?' (page 8)
- 5 Earlier that day, when Jet had thrown herself against it, something had broken. (page 11)
- 6 As her sharp teeth closed on his neck (page 13)

5 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why does Alex steal the mobile phone?
 *Because everything is boring.*
- 2 Why does Alex say 'stupid thing' to the phone?

- 3 How long have Alex and Luke been friends?

- 4 Why is Jet unhappy?

- 5 Where does Jet go when she escapes?

LOOKING FORWARD

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6 Tick (✓) what you think happens in the next two chapters.

- 1 Luke and Alex meet Jet and have an adventure.
- 2 Jet kills again.