



Be different: buy direct
from the author or
tslbooks.uk

Sai-Ko

First I heard Mother's scream.

Then the thump, a horrible splat like a watermelon bursting. Alex and I race each other to the front of the building, but it's too late: the sheet, a flutter of white in the still summer air, has already landed on the object of our curiosity.

A dead body. People surround it: curious, rat-like, armed with fans and sunhats. *Think with Alex's brain, Carmen. Think: broken back, check; broken neck, check; open skull fracture, check; check; check.*

Daddy bought a giant watermelon for the midsummer feast. He carried it all the way to the car, and there, when he relaxed his hold for just a second, searching for his keys, it slipped from his hands and burst open.

Daddy: *Putá madre!*

After two years in Spain, Daddy still swears in Spanish.

Alex: What does *puta madre* mean?

Me: It means your mother is a whore.

The lady has dark hair and the crack on her head is like the crack on a burst watermelon: lightning shaped and full of juice. The juice sizzles on the hot pavement like eggs in a pan.

Me: Do you get vertigo when you throw yourself off a building?

Alex: I don't know, why?

I point out the mushy puddle spread across the faded chalk lines of a hopscotch.

Alex: That's her brains.

Me: Would you like to cut her open? Find the cause of death?

Alex: I'm not as sick as you.

Me: Who says I'm sick?

Alex: Everyone.