To the authors whose books made me a reader,
which made me a writer

First published in the UK in 2025 by Usborne Publishing Limited, Usborne House, 83-85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT, England, usborne.com.

Usborne Verlag, Usborne Publishing Limited, Prüfeninger Str. 20, 93049 Regensburg, Deutschland, VK Nr. 17560

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Trade paperback ISBN 9781805075707

Waterstones exclusive paperback ISBN 9781836045595

JFMAMJJASON /24 9590/01

Printed and bound using 100% renewable energy at CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CRO 4YY.

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RAVENA GURON

MONDAYS ARE MURDER

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1

Aunt Sandra died on a Monday.

I've hated Mondays ever since.

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MONDAY

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2

I grip the faded blue material of the seat as the bus barrels around another corner, my stomach lurching. I'd forgotten that all the drivers in the Longrove area act like they've got a death wish. Or maybe I blocked it from my mind; there's a whole box of memories in my head called Longrove crap that I don't touch – the daredevil bus drivers are the tip of the iceberg.

None of the old people on the bus reacts as we jolt over a particularly bumpy bit of road – one has some knitting out, the needles clicking together in a rhythmic pattern as leaves start scraping at the windows. We're being driven into a hedge.

The journey from the train station into the town centre is supposed to take fifty minutes, because there are a thousand stops and the route goes through winding country roads – but it looks like we'll be doing it in thirty at the speed we're going. Racing towards Longrove, the town I grew up in. The town my parents moved us out of a year ago because Mum couldn't stand to stay.

And now I'm back, dumped on my Uncle Dara for a week while my parents go on a cruise around France to celebrate

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their twentieth wedding anniversary – without me. I wouldn't have got in their way; I even said I'd stay in my cabin and just hang out at the pool. Mum snorted at that.

So I'd said I could stay home alone, in our little place in London. I'm seventeen, I'm responsible. Mum actually *laughed* at that suggestion, and then told me she'd already sorted it with Uncle Dara.

"It's only a week, Kay, stop being so dramatic," she said. "I know it won't exactly be pleasant, but you'll be fine." She hesitated, then, like she knew how much it would actually suck for me. But she didn't say it aloud, because Mum doesn't talk about the emotional stuff. She brushes past it, and focuses on my grades, making sure I'm eating all my fruit and vegetables, drinking enough water. Instead, all she said was, "We'll pick you up on Monday." And that was the end of the conversation.

My phone buzzes, and the name Chloe Jiang flashes up. Chloe insisted on putting her full name in when I first saved her number, all formal, in case I got her mixed up with any of the other Chloes in our year group, none of whose numbers I had.

Chloe: Are you there yet?

Me: You sound like my mother.

Chloe: No, I don't. Has your mother asked you if you're there yet?

Me: Of course she hasn't.

Me: I'm still on the bus. Could die on it too. The driver keeps racing around corners like he's hoping something might be coming the other way.

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Chloe: Hope you don't die. I don't want to sit alone in physics next year.

I smirk. Part of the reason Chloe and I hit it off when I showed up at school last year, alone and miserable, was the fact that we've both got the same dry humour.

Chloe: Your mum's just busy on her holiday.
Me: Well, that and I'm insufferable and she doesn't want to talk to me.
Chloe: Make sure you bring me some of that fudge you said your uncle's so good at making.
Me: You're supposed to tell me I'm not insufferable.
Chloe: Bring me some of that fudge and I will.

I snort. I know the reason Mum is yet to message me is not because I'm "insufferable". We've just never really…clicked. I know that sounds strange to say about your own mum, but it's true. She's always been into telling me what to do and where to go, and criticizing what I'm wearing, and disliking the fact I don't want to become an accountant, bored out of my mind but with a "nice, steady salary". She never liked that I wanted to figure my future out as I went, not have it all mapped out.

And now she dislikes me because I remind her too much of Aunt Sandra – and how she's not here any more.

It's been one year and six days.

And I'm back in the place Aunt Sandra died.

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