1. A Feverish Warning

The ambulance appears to come out of nowhere. Although Titus Jonas steps on the brakes, the old Jonas company van doesn’t react. Uncle Titus swings the steering wheel round and the van grazes through the thick bushes. Branches are whipping the windscreen until the vehicle comes to a groaning halt.

“You idiot!” shouts Uncle Titus at the ambulance.
“I hope nothing has happened at the
museum,” says Justus Jonas, leaning out of the window. Through the thick midday air, shimmering in the heat, he makes out the coastal mountains of Rocky Beach.

“Who knows?” growls Uncle Titus and strokes his moustache. “We’ll see, won’t we?”

A few minutes later, they park at the end of the street in front of the former Natural History Museum. The ambulance is right in front of the entrance, although its driver is nowhere to be seen. Justus jumps out of the transporter.

“Should we ring the bell?”

“No, wait here.” Uncle Titus goes over to the museum and peeps through the open door. Somewhere inside the building an
angry dog is barking. “We had better wait for a second – who knows what’s happened in there.”

A few minutes later, two paramedics come out of the building carrying a stretcher. A dark-haired man and two small boys follow. On the stretcher is a rather thin old man with white hair: it is Dr Wadleigh, the new owner of the Natural History Museum, who also lives on site. Justus recognises him from his visit to Uncle Titus’ Salvage Yard; Dr Wadleigh is a palaeontologist, a specialist in excavating the skeletons of ice-age animals. He often stopped by the Salvage Yard looking for furniture for his museum. Just a week ago, he was a picture of good health; now, he is as white as chalk, his eyes staring into
“The children,” he stammers. The dark-haired man bends towards the stretcher.
“Calm down, dad.” Nevertheless, Dr Wadleigh shakes his head in panic.
“No! It’s so dangerous …”
“There’s no danger, Dad! You’ve just got a fever, that’s all.”
“We’re going to take him to the Memorial Hospital,” says one of the paramedics.
“The children …” repeats Dr Wadleigh, mumbling. He tries to get up, but doesn’t manage to do much more than lift his right arm. Just under his elbow, there is a bandage, stained with dark blood. Justus shivers at the sight of it.

“Listen, please!” The old man turns to the
First Detective. “It’s … dangerous … If the … ti … tiger comes …”
Before he can say any more, the stretcher is put into the ambulance. It is only at this point that the dark-haired man notices Justus and his uncle. He takes a brief look at the blue transporter. “Mr Madsen, used car dealer,” he says, and holds out his hand to Uncle Titus. Titus Jonas frowns.
“There must be some mistake, Sir. I’m Titus Jonas.”
“Oh, I do apologise!” The dark-haired man rearranges his glasses, embarrassed. “Mr Jonas, but of course! With all this stress I’m afraid I’m not quite myself. I’m Quentin Wadleigh.”
“No need to introduce yourself, Mr Wadleigh.” Uncle Titus takes the hand held