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- ▶ Das Hörbuch zur Lektüre und die Tracks zu den Übungen stehen als kostenloser MP3-Download bereit unter: [www.hueber.de/audioservice](http://www.hueber.de/audioservice)

## Meeting the Robinsons

My name is Toby Mann. My family is either dead or gone. Today my caseworker Frank is driving me to a new home. I'm going to live with strangers because some social workers said I couldn't live by myself. Jim and Jess Robinson are going to be my foster parents.

'Are you okay, Toby?' Frank asks. He looks over at me and smiles. 'The Robinsons are nice people. They're really happy that you're going to live with them. Our social work team have chosen a special family for you.' Caseworkers are always very *nice*.

I don't reply. The Robinsons are happy? I'm not. Why do these people want me? They don't know me. I've been moved from place to place around Wollongong since Granny Mann died. Some foster parents only take children for a short time while the social workers find a family that wants a child for a long time. No one wants a sixteen-year-old boy.

Frank says, 'We're nearly there.'

I stop staring at my feet and look out of the car window. It's summer and the sun's shining. The houses we drive past are big, with tall fences or walls and gardens full of trees. My home with Granny Mann was in a small flat in Port Kembla, near the harbour. There weren't many gardens and trees back there.

Frank parks the car in front of a white wooden fence. Behind the fence is a large house. It's white too, with a big red front door. There are red, white and pink roses on either side of the path that leads from the gate up to the front door.

'Come on,' says Frank. He opens his door. 'Do you need help with your bags?'

I don't want to get out and I don't want to meet the Robinsons, who own this big white house in Mount Keira. I



the kitchen.' She talks on and on, but I don't listen. I'm too busy looking at things. Everything is big. And clean. There are pictures on the walls and thick rugs on the wooden floors. The Robinsons must be rich.

'Toby,' Frank calls.

I put down my bags and follow everyone into the kitchen. Big windows look out to the garden behind the house. There's a swimming pool behind a high fence. I'm certain now: the Robinsons are rich.

'Tea or coffee, Toby?' Jess asks.

I turn and look at her. 'Tea, please.' Some cups and plates with roses on them are on a large table. A cake sits on a plate. I remember Granny Mann's old table and the old cups we drank out of.

Jim points at the chair beside him and smiles. 'Sit, Toby.'

I sit down.

Jess says, 'I made this chocolate cake for you. I hope you like it.'

Granny Mann made me a special chocolate cake every birthday. I try to smile but I want to cry.

Frank says, 'Toby!'

'Thank you,' I say to Jess.

She cuts me a large piece of cake. I'm not hungry but I bite into it. It's good so I eat it all.

They all smile at my empty plate. I have to say something; they're all watching me. 'That was good.'

I drink my tea and eat another piece of cake while the adults talk.

Jess says to me, 'If you go upstairs, you'll find your bedroom. It's the room with the door open.'

Jim says, 'You have your own bathroom too.'

In Granny Mann's flat there were two bedrooms – Barney and I slept in one when he lived with us – and one bathroom.

I go back to the living room, pick up my bags and climb the

## Maxine's at night

I sit in my room that night and think. I'll have to go and see Barney. No one believes he was just showing off. They think he's a thief. He needs to know that if he is a thief, I won't be able to live with him. Jim and Jess go to bed. When I'm certain they're asleep I go downstairs to the garage. I find Jim's bike and open the garage door quietly. I close it behind me and ride through the streets to Maxine's. It takes a long time. I leave my bike and walk to Barney's cabin. I knock softly on the door but he doesn't answer. Is he asleep or in the garage?

I go to the front of the repair shop. The door's open a little bit so I go inside. The lights are on and I can hear voices. I hide behind a dirty white van. I hear Maxine and Plod – and Barney. What are they doing so late at night? I look. They're sitting at Maxine's table.

Maxine says, 'I hope he doesn't come too late.'

Plod says, 'It's only 12.30.'

Maxine says, 'I got an order for five more cars today. The sellers can't get enough of them.'

'Five?' says Plod. 'We need to get more, quickly. Where will we find them?'

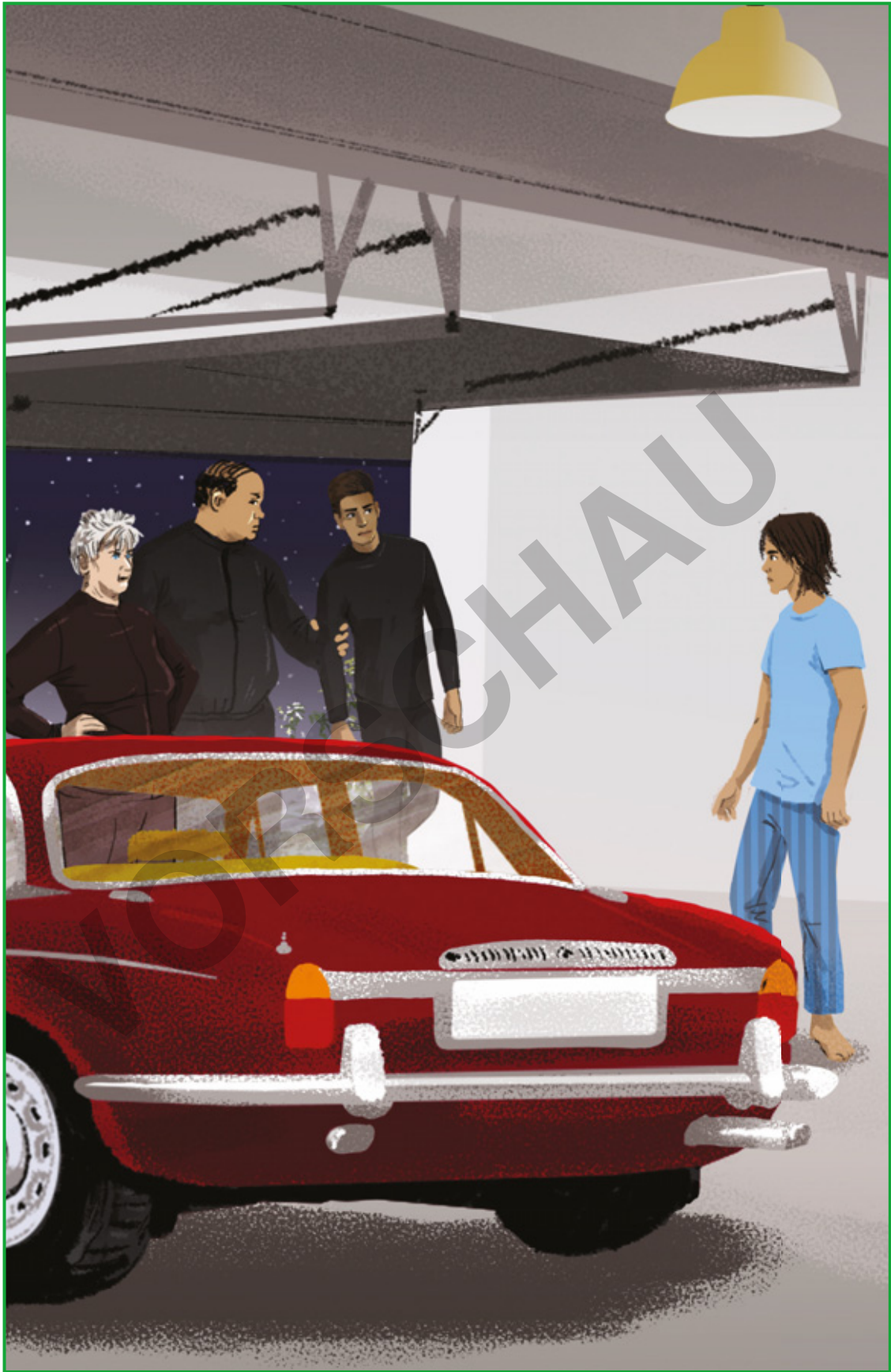
Barney says, 'I've got an idea about that.'

I move and make a noise.

'What's that?' Plod asks. I hear him get up and walk towards the van. There's nowhere to go. Plod comes around the van and sees me. 'You!' He takes my arm and pulls me towards Maxine and Barney. 'Look who I found.'

Just then we hear a car coming down the street. It stops outside.

'Wait there,' says Maxine with a frown. 'Don't let him go, Barney.'



# Activities

## Chapters 1 and 2

### Before you read

A. Look at the picture on page 6. Circle the correct answers.

1. How do you think the young man feels?  
a. happy and comfortable   b. nervous   c. angry
2. How does this house look?  
a. modern and bright   b. old and dark   c. small and old

B. Find these words in your dictionary. Use them in the sentences.

flat   social worker   dishwasher   shake

1. When I meet someone, I \_\_\_\_\_ hands with them.
2. We live in a small \_\_\_\_\_ above a shop.
3. Please put all these plates and glasses in the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Mr Rivers is ninety and lives alone. A \_\_\_\_\_ visits him every Friday.

C. Listen to Track 3 and answer these questions.

1. Who is Frank?  
a. Toby's caseworker   b. Toby's foster parent
2. Where is Frank driving Toby?  
a. to Toby's old home   b. to Toby's new home
3. How old is Toby?  
a. fifteen   b. sixteen

### After you read

#### COMPREHENSION

A. Circle the correct answers.

1. What are Jim and Jess Robinson going to be to Toby?  
a. his caseworkers   b. his foster parents   c. his teachers
2. Where did Granny Mann live?  
a. in a big house   b. in a big flat   c. in a small flat
3. Who used to live with Toby, Grandad and Granny Mann?  
a. Barney   b. Zed   c. Jade
4. Where do Jim and Jess Robinson live?  
a. in Port Kembla   b. in Mount Keira   c. in North Wollongong

B. Circle T for true or F for false for these sentences.

1. After Toby changes classes, school gets worse for him. T / F
2. Toby is too afraid to learn to drive. T / F
3. Toby is happy to hear Frank's news about Barney. T / F
4. When Barney and Toby first see each other outside the repair shop, Barney smiles and says hello. T / F

C. Write short answers to these questions.

1. Who comes to the school gates in a yellow car?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How does Barney know Leon?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Where does Barney work?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Which car is in the garage when Barney comes to the Robinsons'?  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Complete these sentences.

1. Barney asks Toby if his foster parents are \_\_\_\_\_.
2. When Toby drives, Barney tells him to go \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Barney asks Toby if the garage has an \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Barney says that old cars like Jim's cost \_\_\_\_\_.

#### LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

A. Write the correct prepositions in the spaces.

into onto at behind

1. Leon throws a paper plane \_\_\_\_\_ me.
2. Leon walks \_\_\_\_\_ me.
3. I climb \_\_\_\_\_ the roof of the sports building.
4. I get \_\_\_\_\_ trouble.

B. Write the missing nouns in these compounds from Chapters 4 and 5.

1. driver's \_\_\_\_\_
2. steering \_\_\_\_\_
3. driving \_\_\_\_\_
4. learner's \_\_\_\_\_

#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

When Toby says he is in foster care, Barney says, 'Lucky you.' But Barney also says, 'I'm as free as a bird.' How do you think he feels about the idea of being in foster care?

\_\_\_\_\_