

Robbers at the restaurant

It was after ten o'clock when someone knocked on the door of the Nickel Pizzeria. The sign on the door said CLOSED. The door was locked, and inside Theo Lambrou was sitting and counting the night's cash. Theo's father Nick paid him to work in the family restaurant on Saturday nights. Nick was cleaning in the kitchen, and Elena, Theo's mother, had already gone home.

Theo called, 'Sorry, we're closed.' He finished counting and wrote down the amount.

The person knocked again, loudly.

'Dad, there's someone at the front door,' Theo called.

'Coming,' Nick said. Theo's father walked to the door and looked out through the glass. 'I can't see anyone,' he said, turning back.

Crash! The glass broke. A tall man dressed in black stood outside. He kicked the door open and walked in.

'Now you're open,' the man said. He was carrying a gun.

Nick walked backwards away from him. Theo sat still, his mouth open.

A second man followed the first one inside. He also carried a gun, and had a bag. Both men wore black masks over their faces, with holes for their eyes and mouth.

'Give us that cash,' the first man said to Theo. The man's bright blue eyes were staring at him.

Theo couldn't move.

The second man put the bag on the table. 'Fill this.'

'Theo,' Nick said quietly. 'Put the cash in the bag.'

Theo held on to the table. The first man's gun was pointing at him. *I'm going to die*, he thought, and closed his eyes.

'I'll do it,' said Nick. He walked slowly to the table with his hands in the air then put the money into the bag.



Theo knew there wasn't much cash. Most people paid by card. 'Where's the safe?' asked the first man. 'We know you have one.' 'It's this way,' said Nick.

The second man, with the bag, followed Nick into the back room. The first man stayed with Theo. 'I don't like waiting,' he said. 'I hope your daddy doesn't try anything silly.'

Theo's legs shook.

Nick and the second man came back. The bag was full.

'There was a lot more cash in the safe,' the man told the other.

‘Right, let’s get out of here,’ the first man said. ‘Goodbye!’
He held up his gun.

Theo cried, ‘No!’

The men laughed – and then they were gone.

Nick hugged Theo and said, ‘Are you okay, son?’

‘I’m ... I ... not really,’ Theo said. There were tears in his eyes.

Nick sat down beside Theo. ‘I’ve had enough. This is the third time in two years that something like this has happened. The other times they broke windows to get in. No one was here and they didn’t find any money. This time was different. They could have killed you. I can’t let this happen again.’

‘What can you do?’

‘First I’ll call the police, of course. Then your mother and I will talk about what to do. We need to make a plan.’

Theo frowned. ‘A plan? What kind of plan?’

Nick said, ‘We’ll think of something.’

The police came, and Nick and Theo told them what had happened. Then Nick took Theo home.

Elena cried and hugged him. ‘Theo, my dear, are you okay?’

‘I was afraid, Mum,’ he said. ‘Really afraid.’

The next few weeks weren’t easy for Theo. He never felt like eating and almost stopped talking. He didn’t want to go out with his friends or play football. He just felt tired and wanted to lie down all the time. He was afraid to go to the restaurant.

At night Theo had bad dreams – he saw the robber with the blue eyes pointing his gun at him and then shooting. He woke up, afraid. It happened night after night. When he lay awake, Theo sometimes heard his parents talking about him.

One afternoon when Theo went to the restaurant after school, there was a big sign on the outside wall: FOR SALE. Theo found his parents working in the kitchen.

‘What’s going on?’ said Theo. ‘Why is that sign outside?’

‘Theo, sit down, please,’ said Nick.

They all sat down. Nick said, ‘Mum and I have a plan, Theo. We’re going to sell the business and move out of the city.’

I don’t like this, thought Theo. ‘Move away? Where to?’

‘There’s a pizza restaurant for sale in Clifftown,’ said Elena.

‘Clifftown? But –’

‘Yes,’ said Elena. ‘Zoe’s town.’

Theo’s older sister Zoe lived in Clifftown, a small town on the coast south of Sydney. She had left Sydney two years ago, when she was eighteen. All the time she was at high school Zoe was in trouble, at home and at school. She smoked cigarettes, stayed out late and never did her homework. She and Elena fought, and the house was never quiet. Nick always used to say to Theo ‘You’re a good son. We never have any trouble with you.’

Elena showed Theo some photos of the restaurant – the Pizza Palace – on her phone. It was across the road from the beach.

‘And look,’ said Nick. ‘The café where Zoe works is next door.’

Elena showed Theo another photo – the café and the restaurant were side by side. ‘It will be nice to be closer to Zoe,’ she said. ‘We miss her.’

Nick said, ‘So, what do you think about our plan, Theo? The city’s just too dangerous. We’ll be safer in Clifftown.’

Elena agreed. ‘Those men could have killed you, Theo. We need to go somewhere we can live without fear.’

Theo didn’t know what to say to them. Theo liked his city life. There were lots of things to do, and all his friends were there.

Elena said, ‘Your holidays start at the end of this week. We’ll go down to Clifftown to look at the restaurant. It will be good to see Zoe, and she’ll be pleased to see us, I hope.’

‘I’m sure she will be,’ said Nick.

Theo didn’t say anything. He knew his sister wasn’t going to be happy to see her parents.

Was she going to be happy to see him?

Chapter 2

Clifftown

Theo sat in the back seat of his parents' car on Sunday, looking out of the window. The sky was grey and it was raining. It was the July school holidays – winter – and there weren't many cars on the road. They were driving through forest, but the sea wasn't far away.

Nick said, 'We're nearly there. Clifftown's only another ten kilometres.'

They began to pass farms, then houses. Theo heard loud engine noises from behind them. He turned and saw a line of motorbikes getting closer. The first bike passed their car fast and close. Theo thought it was going to hit them. The rider wore a black-and-red helmet. The other bikes went past fast too.

'Silly fools!' said Nick angrily. 'That's dangerous. Some young people are very foolish.'

Elena said, 'But not our Theo!' She turned and smiled at him. Then she said, 'We'll go to Zoe's house first to say hello, then we'll find The Tops.'

They drove into Clifftown and down the main street, which ran along the beach.

'Look, there's the Pizza Palace,' said Nick. 'We're meeting the owner there tomorrow.'

'And look – that's the café where Zoe works,' said Elena.

They found Zoe's place, a small house close to the main street. A big black motorbike was parked outside the gate. Zoe was at the gate talking to a man in biker clothes – black jacket and black trousers. He was holding a black-and-red helmet.

When Zoe saw Theo and his parents get out of the car, she said something quickly to the man, and he went into the house.

Zoe walked towards her family and said, 'What are you doing here?'

‘Surprise!’ said Elena.

‘Yeah, well, not a good one,’ said Zoe. ‘My friend just got back from Sydney.’

‘He passed us on the road,’ said Nick.

‘Who is he?’ Elena asked.

‘His name’s Jan. Jan Bakker.’ She frowned. ‘Why are you here?’

Nick explained that they were in Clifftown to look at the Pizza Palace.

Zoe said, ‘That’s not a very nice restaurant.’

Theo thought Zoe was lying. She clearly didn’t want them in Clifftown.

Elena said, ‘Well, we’ve come to take a look at it, and I hope you’re wrong, Zoe.’

‘You can’t stay here with me,’ Zoe said. ‘There are only two bedrooms – one for me and one for my friend Millie.’

‘No, of course not,’ Nick said. ‘We’re staying in a cabin on a farm. It’s called The Tops.’

‘We’re going there now,’ said Elena. ‘But we’ll come and see you at the café tomorrow.’

Elena kissed Zoe on the cheek and Nick hugged her. She gave them a small smile, but it wasn’t a warm one.

Theo said, ‘See you!’ and she gave him a proper smile.

‘See you too, kid,’ she said.

They got back into the car and drove away. Elena waved, but Zoe had gone inside. ‘I don’t think she was happy to see us. And her friend didn’t want to meet us either.’

‘Well, she didn’t know we were coming,’ Nick said. ‘She’ll be happier when we see her tomorrow.’

Theo thought Nick was wrong about that.

Theo was looking at his phone when the car stopped suddenly. He looked up. At the side of the road there were yellow flashing lights on a sign on a post. The sign had a picture of a cow on it and read COWS CROSSING. A herd of black-and-white cows was



crossing in front of their car, followed by a man on a quad bike and a brown dog.

Wow! Theo thought. They have traffic lights for cows here.

The cows came close to the car. One of them looked at Theo through the window. Theo moved away from the window. The cow walked away. After the cows had all crossed the road and the light stopped flashing they drove on.

Soon they turned through a gate that had a sign on it saying THE TOPS.

‘Here we are,’ said Nick. ‘Now we have to find the Brittens.’

They continued on for a minute and reached the farmhouse. A small woman with long blonde hair hurried down the steps at the front of the house.

‘Hello! You must be the Lambrou family. Welcome!’ she called, smiling brightly.

Nick opened the car door and got out. Elena and Theo followed.

‘I’m Bronwen Britten. Nice to meet you. My husband Josh and our kids Kai and Nat are in the dairy.’ She shook their hands. ‘It’s milking time. Did you see our herd?’

Nick said, ‘Yes. We had to stop at the flashing light.’

Bronwen gave Nick a key. ‘Here’s the key to your cabin. Just follow the road by the side of the house. You’ll see three cabins – a red one, a yellow one and a blue one. Yours is the blue one – it’s called Seabird. I hope you’ll be happy here. After you’ve settled in, please come back here to the house and we’ll have afternoon tea.’ She hurried back up the stairs.

She talks a lot, thought Theo.

‘She’s friendly,’ said Elena.

‘People in the country are like that,’ said Nick.

They drove past a field full of cows and a building Nick said was the dairy, and found the cabin called Seabird.

Elena unlocked the door and they carried their bags inside. Theo’s room was small, but it had big windows looking through trees towards the sea.

When they’d put their things away and had a look around, Elena said, ‘I’d love a cup of tea.’

‘Let’s walk back to the farmhouse,’ said Nick. ‘Afternoon tea will be good. I’m hungry.’

Theo said he wanted to stay in the cabin.

‘Come on, Theo,’ said Elena. ‘And put on your jacket. It’s getting cold outside.’

‘Do I have to go?’

‘Yes. Bronwen said she has kids. They could be your age. You’ll need to make new friends when we move down here.’

Theo put on his jacket.

Bronwen met them at the front door of the farmhouse. ‘Hello! Everything okay?’ She led them inside. In the kitchen a man and two kids – a boy and a girl around Theo’s age – stood smiling. Josh Britten was tall with short brown hair and green eyes. Both kids were tall too and had brown hair, and eyes like their father’s.

Josh and Kai shook hands with Theo and his parents, and Nat said, ‘Hi.’

‘Please, sit,’ Bronwen said. She pointed at a wooden table.

Theo sat between Kai and Nat.

While they drank tea and ate chocolate cake, Nat asked Theo a lot of questions. ‘How old are you?’

‘Sixteen.’

‘The same as Kai. He’s almost seventeen. I’m fourteen.’ She continued with her questions: ‘When’s your birthday?’ ‘Where do you go to school?’ ‘What’s your favourite subject?’ ‘Do you do sport?’

Theo answered in one or two words.

It was getting dark when they walked back to the cabin. Theo felt tired.

‘They’re lovely kids,’ Elena said.

‘You’ll have a good time with them,’ said Nick.

Theo said nothing. He’d talked too much already. When they got back to the cabin, he found his book and went to his room to read. The next thing he noticed was the sun shining through the window. It was Monday morning.

This is the German version of **Nothing to Hide**

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