

# 1. Prologue

The vehicle rolls once, twice, three times before it comes to rest.

Then all is still. Dust rises up from underneath the shattered chassis. Past the smoking wreckage, summer wheat is turning gold.

There is a ticking sound, the back left wheel continuing to spin. A hissing sound as steam escapes. A dripping sound as petrol ebbs out of the tank. The vehicle is tilting backwards, upside down like a discarded toy.

There is movement in the cabin, then a gasp. Shattered glass as the young driver kicks the shards out of the window pane. With difficulty, he clammers out. He is not badly hurt. But he was going somewhere. For something urgent. He must remember. A line of blood runs down his face.

The gauze is there, the feeling of strangeness. The air around is hot and bent and the silver chassis is glinting and the young man feels as if there should be sound but there is nothing, now the hissing and dripping have finished.

His feet are wet.

The thing he was supposed to remember is coming for him.

The rear view mirror has smashed and lies three metres from the broken door. The young man picks it up. He looks in it and sees himself and jagged sky mosaic behind. And behind again, the thing that he must know.

With another great effort he shuts his eyes and takes a breath, reaches a hand for the vehicle and then retreats. In his mouth he tastes the blood and dust. The heat is bearing down on him and it is coming and he turns and he looks out to the billowing horizon.