Chapter 1:

There was a loud knock on the door. Kalle jumped.

He was standing in the hallway, his rucksack on his shoulders. Like he had been standing for almost five minutes. It was the first day of school. He was starting at a new school, and their house was full of boxes.

He was so worried it hurt. All over.

His mum popped her head out from the kitchen.

* Who on Earth could that be?

Kalle swallowed.

* But seriously, Kalle Berg, his mum said. – Open it, then!

Kalle carefully pulled the door open.

Outside stood a tall, thin boy shuffling his feet – almost as if he needed the toilet. He could have been Kalle’s age, sweaty and ruffled, with only one front tooth.

The boy grinned from ear to ear.

* HI! I’m ESKIL. Eskil HOLMEN. You ARE the new kid, right?

Eskil walked right in, grabbed Kalle’s hand and shook it hard, and for a long time. In the end, Kalle pulled his hand back.

* Er… maybe?

Eskil threw out his arms.

* Of COURSE you are. Do you want to walk to SCHOOL together?

Kalle felt a warm wind blow through the gap in the doorway, tickling his cheek.

* Sure, he said.
* COOL, said Eskil. – I’ve been SO CURIOUS about who you are. You’re BOTH my new neighbour AND starting in 4B, which is MY class! Talk about LUCKY!

Kalle smiled faintly.

* Yeah, I guess it is?

Eskil laughed.

* But what are we WAITING for? COME ON, let’s go!

Kalle didn’t even have time to shake his head, the way he usually did when someone wanted to bring him along to something.

Eskil just grabbed his hand and pulled him outside.

Chapter 2:

It was a lovely late summer morning. The sun was round and warm in the sky, the leaves on the trees rustling lightly in the wind.

Kalle was a bit shocked, really. He’d never met someone like Eskil before. In his old class, Kalle had simply sat at the back in the middle column without making a sound. No one had noticed him. Not even the teachers.

* You might wonder what MARIBAKKEN school is like? Eskil interrupted his thoughts.
* Yes? Kalle panted in reply, two steps behind Eskil on the pavement.
* And not least WHAT 4B is like? Eskil continued.
* Yes?
* And I guess you’re also a bit CURIOUS about or teacher, HEGE?
* Yes?

Eskil glanced quickly over his shoulder at Kalle.

* Watch out for her BEAR hugs. They’re famous. And REALLY embarrassing!
* Right?
* And you’re probably wondering if the PRINCIPAL is nice?
* Yes?
* And if there are any cool GIRLS there?
* No.
* And I bet you’re wondering if anything EXCITING is happening at school?
* Yes?

Eskil sprinted up a hill, went around a bend, and there was the building in front of them: Maribakken school. The place Kalle would spend his days from now on.

* Well, the ONLY thing you need to know, Eskil said, - is that nothing EVER happens at Maribakken, nothing at all. Nothing exciting. Nothing fun. NOTHING! It may well be the most boring school in the WORLD!

Kalle raised an eyebrow.

* Really?

This actually sounded promising to Kalle. He was happiest when not very much was happening. That meant the risk of ending up in a scary situation was quite minor.

* YOU BET! Eskil shouted into his ear, before rushing into the schoolyard, Kalle in tow.

To Kalle’s great surprise, Eskil said hello to nearly every girl he met.

“HI. HI. WELL, HI. NICE TO SEE YOU!”

Kalle looked around cautiously. Maribakken school was a small, red, wooden building. Kalle knew only 70 children attended the school. Most of them were in the schoolyard right now. Some were playing. Some were standing around talking. But most of them were playing stickball. A tall boy in a Barcelona top was tossing the ball into the air. While a little blonde girl was holding the bat.

THUNK!

And the ball came flying. Right at his face! Kalle ducked with lightning speed, the ball grazed his hair – and zoomed onwards, into the woods.

Kalle stood back, frozen in fear. His heart was pounding inside his chest.

* That was DEAD CLOSE! Eskil gave a nervous laugh.

Two girls came walking quietly towards Kalle. One was the little blonde girl who had hit the ball. She was biting her nails. Her eyes were darting here and there. The other was a girl in a hijab with large, brown eyes.

* Sorry, the blonde girl whispered. – I didn’t mean it.
* Gina can’t help herself, the girl in the hijab interjected. She’s our best stickball player.
* She certainly is not, a voice behind them complained.

Kalle turned around, seeing the tall boy in the Barcelona top. He was standing with his arms crossed, sulking.

* I was the one who completed the final, deciding run in last year’s national school championship, he growled.
* But it was easy for you, the girl in the hijab sighed. – Gina whacked the ball way into the woods.
* What? I was running super fast …

Eskil put his arms around their shoulders.

* Now, stop fighting. You have to say hello to KALLE! HE’s the new kid in our class.
* Noor, said the girl in the hijab, shaking his hand solemnly.
* Gina, said the short, blonde girl.

Kalle just had time to think that they smelled nice, before the tall boy shook his hand vigorously and at length.

* Aksel. The best stickball player in the whole school!
* Second best, Noor corrected him.
* See you in lesson ONE! Eskil said, dragging Kalle further into the schoolyard.
* Gina IS the best stickball player in school, he whispered in Kalle’s ear. – No DOUBT. But as I was saying. Apart from the fact that we LOVE stickball at Maribakken, nothing EVER happens…

The words kept pouring out of Eskil. But he was really only repeating his point about how sensationally uneventful Maribakken school was.

Kalle, however, thought to himself: hm. Just now he’d nearly been knocked unconscious by a stray, rock hard ball. Maybe things happened at this school after all?

Kalle didn’t have time to continue his train of thought. Because in that moment, a huge man in a suit came storming out of the main entrance. He stopped at the top of the stairs, where he remained, looking around uncertainly.

Eskil bounded up the steps in two leaps.

* Has anything happened, PRINCIPAL Børresen? Eskil said.

At first, principal Børresen shook his head. Really quickly.

* Oh yes it has. I can TELL from looking at you, Eskil said.

Principal Børresen deflated a little. Then he drew a breath, staring into Eskil’s eyes.

* There was a burglary here last night, he whispered.