

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### The Empire State Building

Mr. Black and I spent months looking for the lock together. The last person we visited was Ruth Black, and the address for her was the eighty-sixth floor of the Empire State Building. That was strange because I didn't think people lived there.

I felt panicky about going up so high and having to use the elevator, but Mr. Black said it was OK to feel that. He patiently encouraged me to do it.

"OK, OK," I said after a long time. "I'll come with you."

In the elevator I held Mr. Black's hand and was incredibly nervous. When the elevator door opened, we were on the floor where tourists can look out at the city below. I knew it should be an exciting place to be, but I couldn't stop imagining a plane flying toward the building and crashing into it. I stood still and imagined what the last second would be like. There would be an extremely loud noise, and it would feel like the building was going to fall over. I know that is what it felt like from all the descriptions I've read on the internet. Then there would be lots of smoke and people screaming all around me. It would get so hot that my skin would start to burn. Then I would have to choose if I stayed there and burned, or jumped into the street, where it was cool, but I would definitely die. Which would I choose? Would I jump, or would I burn? And there would

still be a few seconds to call someone on my cell phone. Who should I call? What should I say? I didn't know.

I stopped myself thinking those thoughts and started to look around. Mr. Black was very near the edge and was looking at Central Park. Near him was an old woman who was holding a **clipboard**. She stared at me as I walked toward Mr. Black. It made me feel uncomfortable, and even Mr. Black noticed it.

"You know what," he whispered. "I think she's the one." For some reason, I knew he was right. But, before we had decided which of us should go and talk to her, she had come to us.

"Hello! I'm Ruth. Shall I show you around this very special building?" she said.

