

“Tiger father begets tiger son.”
Chinese proverb

For Eli Maverick,
in memory of his tiger father
Eric Seagraves.

And for Emilia. Always.

SLICK

DEAR PERSON READING THIS,

My name is Danny, and I need your help. First off, I should tell you that this isn't my story – it's Eric's. Well, the name he was given was Eric, but I called him Slick, and he was my best friend. I say *was* because he died six months ago.

Before you start reading Slick's story, I want to tell you about him. I need you to like him, and you probably won't after reading the first few pages, unless all you care about is the kind of shoes you wear and how many friends you have on Kudos. I definitely didn't think much of him when I first got to know him. See, when I met Slick, he was *obsessed* with brands and being popular. Me: I didn't care about the brand of anything I wore or owned – not that I had ever had much choice about that.

But none of those things matter when you're friends. And that's what we became: friends. Best friends.

And then he was gone. And when I say gone, I mean he was killed. And the next day, it was like nothing had ever happened.

But it *did* happen, and there's no way I'm letting *them* get away with it. They think there's nothing I can do, because I'm just a dumb twelve-year-old kid. I guess they forgot that even a dumb twelve-year-old can use a computer.

So here's my plan:

- 1) Publish Slick's journal.
- 2) The whole world reads it.
- 3) The people who killed him spend the rest of *their* dumb lives rotting in a jail cell.

That's basically it. You wouldn't believe it took me four months to come up with that.

Anyway, before you start reading Slick's journal, there are a couple of things I need to tell you:

One, I've taken out some stuff. You're not missing anything. The first month of Slick's journal is kind of like reading a dictionary:

A duck pond is a pond with ducks in it.

That kind of thing. Also, I added some stuff – the parts where it made more sense if I explained what happened. I think it's obvious which parts are mine and which are Slick's – I'm the one who doesn't list every single thing a person is wearing. And I'm funnier. Which isn't as braggy as it sounds – my mum tells better jokes than Slick, and that's really saying something.

Two, and this is kind of important: Slick was a robot.

Actually, he was an android – a robot that looks and sounds like a human being. You've probably heard of them, but until the Canny Valley androids were built, the only ones that really looked or sounded like humans were the ones in movies. There are already sixty thousand Canny Valley androids in the world, including Slick's parents. They're everywhere. They live around us, acting like normal humans living normal lives, doing normal jobs and making normal – human – friends. But Slick

was special. Slick was the first child android. He didn't know that, though. He thought he was just a normal kid moving to a new town, because that's what they'd programmed him to think. And we all thought that too, until a pillow fight changed everything. I'll get to that later.

So here it is – Slick's journal. And after you read it, please tell everyone you know. If word gets out, then they'll have to pay for what they did. I know this could get me into trouble, but I have to do something. You'd do the same if it was your best friend, wouldn't you?

OK, I'm done, and now I'd like to introduce you to my best friend, Slick. He was awesome – I'm sorry you didn't get to meet him.

– Danny


```
bool isAngry(Human human)
{
    if(human.lips.getState() ==
        HUMANLIPSSTATE.TIGHT && human.mouth.
        getState() == HUMANMOUTHSTATE.CLOSED &&
        human.eyes.getState() == HUMANEYESSTATE.
        NARROWED &&
        human.eyeBrows.getState() ==
        HUMANEYEBROWSSTATE.LOW)
    {
        return true;
    }
    else
    {
        return false;
    }
}
```


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SLICK

MONDAY 8TH OCTOBER

Today was the day I found out that I had made my first real friend. I was seventy-five per cent certain Harry was my friend before this morning, but it wasn't until I got an invitation to his birthday party that I knew for sure. When he gave me the invitation, he looked annoyed. At first I thought this might mean that he didn't really want me to come and that he'd been made to ask me because I was new, but then he apologized for the lame invite. He said his mother had made him give them out so that she could keep track of the numbers coming. That's when I understood that feeling angry can look a lot like feeling embarrassed.

I don't know why it bothered him so much. I like the invitation – it has skateboards all around it. I love skateboarding. At the top it says “Let's Sk8 to Celebrate”, and then a list of all the information: date, time and place. It was very clear, and I could see his mother's point: it must be hard to organize a party if you don't know how many people will be coming. I couldn't see Harry's problem with it.

Harry is just one of my friends. I have twenty.

- One is 100 per cent confirmed: Harry. See above.
- Two of these are 75 per cent confirmed friends: Luke and Tyler. These are the people who invite me to sit at their table at lunch and pick me for their teams, and who I have seen outside of school.
- Three of these are 65 per cent confirmed friends: Mateo, Jake and Theo. These are the people who invite me to sit at their table at lunch and pick me for their teams.
- Fourteen are 50 per cent confirmed friends. These are the people that I have had more than two conversations with (not schoolwork-related) since I got here.

I don't have a best friend. Maybe when I've been here longer I'll have one, but I think a month is probably not long enough to choose a best friend yet.

Notes:

- I now have 457 friends on Kudos. I had 320 when I arrived, but I don't remember any of them. It's weird how quickly you forget about your old life when it's gone.
- Of the 137 friends that I've made since we moved to Ashland, only eighteen are Real World Friends (RWFs). The rest are Virtual Friends (VFs), which are the same as RWFs, except you've only met them on the Internet. Most of my new VFs are friends of friends, so they will probably become RWFs at some point.
- Luke: 438,118 Kudos friends. Harry: 640 Kudos friends. Mateo: 509 Kudos friends. Tyler: 383 Kudos friends.
- Luke has the most Kudos friends because he is a singer and has his own video channel (LuckyLuke7). The last song he uploaded, 'In Your Dreams', has 2,004,833 likes.
- Harry said that nobody says "rad" any more. I will stop saying "rad".
- Two girls commented on my profile picture today. One said, "Cute!" The other wrote three heart emojis. I replied, "Thank

you very much,” as I haven’t met either of them and didn’t know what else to write. They don’t go to my school.

- My profile picture is cool. That’s what Harry said, and the others agreed. It’s of me mid-air on my Baltic Wave skateboard, and I’m looking straight ahead at the sea. I put it up before we moved to Ashland. I don’t remember who took it.
- Mum and Dad do not have Kudos accounts. This is because they are adults, so they only count their RWFs. Mum has thirty-nine RWFs. Five of these are 100 per cent confirmed as they have invited her out to do something more than once. Dad has twelve RWFs, but none of these are 100 per cent confirmed. Dad said that this is because men make friends in a different way to women and kids.

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SLICK

TUESDAY 9TH OCTOBER

I told my parents about Harry's party this morning before school. Dad said I can't go. He said I have to be at the fund-raiser.

A fund-raiser is an event that's held to raise money for a cause.

I asked my dad what the cause was. "It's for your sister," he said, which made no sense at all as my sister is dead.

My sister died before we moved here. I don't really remember her much, because she was in the hospital most of my life, but I know what she looked like, because there are pictures of her everywhere in our house. People say I look like her, which is a strange thing to say about a girl and a boy. I think they probably mean that she had blond hair and blue eyes like I have. Everyone who sees her picture says how pretty she was. She died a year ago. It was Mum's idea to hold a fund-raiser for the local hospital, even though my sister was never treated there. Mum said it's the perfect opportunity to meet our new neighbours properly and to

do something good for the community. I think it's more important for me to make new friends, but I can't drive yet, and children have to do what their parents tell them, so there was no point in arguing. I don't know how this will affect my friendship with Harry, as this hasn't happened to me before.

I think Harry is still my friend. I told him that I couldn't go to his party because my parents were having a fund-raiser for my dead sister. His cheeks turned red and he said, "That's cool." Then everyone at the table went silent for a while, and I thought maybe things weren't cool at all. Sometimes people don't say how they're feeling, and I find it confusing. But then Harry told me that he'd asked for a Baltic skateboard for his birthday, and we started talking about that. So I think we must still be friends, because it would be strange to start a conversation with someone you didn't like any more.

Harry asked his parents for the Baltic Flame skateboard. I have the Wave version, which is the same design, just different artwork. They're both cool. Luke said he's going to ask for one too for his birthday. His birthday is in December. I wonder if I'll be invited to his party.

Notes:

- I changed my profile picture to one I took today. It's of me, Tyler, Harry, Luke and Mateo, with our arms around each other, laughing after football practice. I got Theo to take it with my Hexam R3 as the camera on it has better picture quality than Theo's. It also comes with over 120 filters to use. I chose the Woodstock filter. Luke and Theo also have Hexams, but the R2, not the R3.

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SLICK

SATURDAY 13TH OCTOBER

Today I spent the day going around the neighbourhood with Mum and Dad to give out the flyers for the fund-raiser. Dad and Mum already know quite a few of our neighbours, as Mum is a member of the gardening club, the book club and the bridge club, and Dad is a member of the golf club and the bridge club. They like clubs.

It took us six hours to deliver eighty-five flyers, because we kept getting invited into people's houses.

After the fifth glass of lemonade, I said it would be much quicker if we just posted the flyers, but Dad said that speaking to people would make it more likely that they would come.

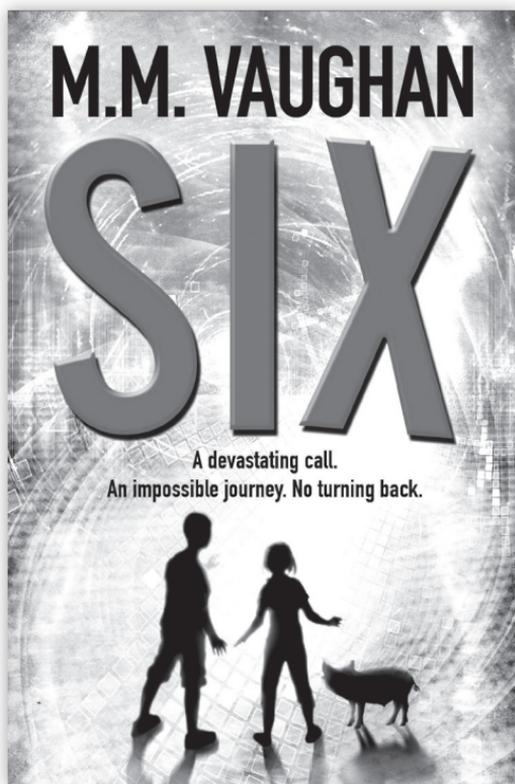
Notes:

- People say "please excuse the mess" a lot, even when their house is tidy.
- A lot of people didn't look happy to see us when they answered the door, even though they hadn't met us before.

- After we told them that we were raising money in memory of my dead sister, everyone was nice.
- Two people cried.
- The lady at 24 Holland Road opened the door in a towel. Her face turned bright red and she slammed the door closed without saying anything. We waited, but she never came back, so we put the flyer under the door.
- Harry answered the door at his house wearing a new pair of Slick trainers. He invited me to his house last week after school, and he didn't have any Slicks. I know this because his shoes were all lined up on a rack in his room. I told him that he should get a pair of Slicks as they're really comfortable and you can jump much higher in them (Harry likes to play basketball). I also told him that Brad "Slipstream" Brooks is wearing them in the new Slick ad. And now Harry has a pair. I told him they were awesome, and I said it would be cool if all our group wore Slicks. He agreed.
- I like Harry.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

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When Parker Banks moves with his family from London to New York, he struggles to adapt to his new school and environment. His scientist dad is constantly at work on a top-secret technological venture for a major corporation, when one day he is kidnapped. It is up to Parker, along with his deaf sister Emma, their friend Michael and the pet pig their father left behind, to find and rescue him. They have at their disposal the E.F.E. device that their dad has invented to allow the family members to communicate with one another through telepathy.

As their search progresses, it becomes clear that SIX, the project that Parker's father has been involved in against his will, is a sinister enterprise that poses a threat not only to the Banks family, but to the world at large.

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