

ALEX RIDER



SOON TO  
BE A MAJOR  
MOTION  
PICTURE!

# STORMBREAKER

ANTHONY HOROWITZ

New York Times *best-selling author*

# 1

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## FUNERAL VOICES

WHEN THE DOORBELL rings at three in the morning, it's never good news.

Alex Rider was woken by the first chime. His eyes flickered open, but for a moment he stayed completely still in his bed, lying on his back with his head resting on the pillow. He heard a bedroom door open and a creak of wood as somebody went downstairs. The bell rang a second time, and he looked at the alarm clock glowing beside him. There was a rattle as someone slid the security chain off the front door.

He rolled out of bed and walked over to the open window, his bare feet pressing down the carpet pile. The moonlight spilled onto his chest and shoulders. Alex was fourteen, already well built, with the body of an athlete. His hair, cut short apart from two thick strands hanging over his forehead, was fair. His eyes were brown and serious. For a moment he stood silently, half hidden in the shadow, looking out. There



was a police car parked outside. From his second-floor window Alex could see the black ID number on the roof and the caps of the two men who were standing in front of the door. The porch light went on and, at the same time, the door opened.

"Mrs. Rider?"

"No. I'm the housekeeper. What is it? What's happened?"

"This is the home of Mr. Ian Rider?"

"Yes."

"I wonder if we could come in . . ."

And Alex already knew. He knew from the way the police stood there, awkward and unhappy. But he also knew from the tone of their voices. Funeral voices . . . that was how he would describe them later. The sort of voices people use when they come to tell you that someone close to you has died.

He went to his door and opened it. He could hear the two policemen talking down in the hall, but only some of the words reached him.

". . . a car accident . . . called the ambulance . . . intensive care . . . nothing anyone could do . . . so sorry."

It was only hours later, sitting in the kitchen, watching as the gray light of morning bled slowly

through the West London streets, that Alex could try to make sense of what had happened. His uncle—Ian Rider—was dead. Driving home, his car had been hit by a truck at Old Street roundabout and he had been killed almost instantly. He hadn't been wearing a seat belt, the police said. Otherwise, he might have had a chance.

Alex thought of the man who had been his only relation for as long as he could remember. He had never known his own parents. They had both died in another accident, this one a plane crash, a few weeks after he had been born. He had been brought up by his father's brother (never "uncle"—Ian Rider had hated that word) and had spent fourteen years in the same terraced house in Chelsea, London, between the King's Road and the river. The two of them had always been close. Alex remembered the vacations they'd taken together, the many sports they'd played, the movies they'd seen. They hadn't just been relations, they'd been friends. It was almost impossible to imagine that he would never again see the man, hear his laughter, or twist his arm to get help with his science homework.

Alex sighed, fighting against the sense of grief that was suddenly overwhelming. But what saddened him





# RECRUITED!

They told him his uncle Ian died in a car accident. But fourteen-year-old Alex Rider knows that's a lie, and the bullet holes in his uncle's windshield confirm his suspicions. But nothing prepares him for the news that the uncle he always thought he knew was really a spy for MI6—Britain's top-secret intelligence agency. Recruited to find his uncle's killers and complete Ian's final mission, Alex suddenly finds himself caught in a deadly game of cat and mouse, with no way out.

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