

Finn clung to the wheel, his knuckles white with the effort of holding on.

Rain lashed the windscreen faster than the wipers could flick it away. He could hardly see a thing.

And now the car was veering off-course again, crossing over the catseyes and rattling down the opposite side of the road.

Finn wrestled with the steering wheel – but it was no use.

The car had a mind of its own.

*Please don't let anyone come the other way. It doesn't matter about prison. I'll go if I have to ... just don't let me die. Don't let Mum be left alone...*

But Finn's luck had run out.

Something was approaching from the other direction.

Just a yellow speck on the horizon at first.

A speck that was hurtling towards Finn at a cool ninety miles an hour.

The driver of the sports car saw the danger too late.

In a fraction of a second Finn's whole world spun out of focus. He was no longer Finn Oliver, the infamous joyrider. He was the epicentre of a force-twelve tornado, rotating away from the road and twisting towards the moor.

Snatches of gorse and heather mingled with fragments of vicious sky as the car ricocheted over

the drystone wall at the edge of the road.

Still gripping the steering wheel for all he was worth, Finn traversed the moor in a perfect arc. Shards of glass punctured the air.

For a millionth of a second the car grazed the drenched moorland.

If it had come down on any other patch of ground, Finn would simply have been another statistic. Death by dangerous driving.

But the car hit the surface of the Earth at Exit 43.

It slid through the membrane like a hot knife through butter, plunging into the darkness and catapulting Finn from its shattered windscreen as it fell.

Above him, the moor closed back over the opening.

And at that moment, though no one yet knew it, the entire future of the Underworld changed course.