

Penguin  Readers

MALORIE BLACKMAN

BOYS
DON'T
CRY



Contents

Note about the story	6
Before-reading questions	6
Chapter One – Results day	7
Chapter Two – Headaches	12
Chapter Three – Boys don't cry	13
Chapter Four – It's just a blood test	18
Chapter Five – She's not coming back	19
Chapter Six – Listen and learn	22
Chapter Seven – Holding the baby	22
Chapter Eight – OMG	26
Chapter Nine – It's sleeping in my room?	27
Chapter Ten – Just a phase	29
Chapter Eleven – I am who I am	31
Chapter Twelve – Dad goes shopping	31
Chapter Thirteen – Bar Belle	35
Chapter Fourteen – Toad face	40
Chapter Fifteen – Being different	41
Chapter Sixteen – What's wrong with me?	44
Chapter Seventeen – Aunt Jackie	48
Chapter Eighteen – She's yours	51
Chapter Nineteen – A family walk	53
Chapter Twenty – Happy and sad	55
Chapter Twenty-one – Veronica's visit	55
Chapter Twenty-two – You don't want her	58
Chapter Twenty-three – Enough	60

Chapter Twenty-four – At the doctor’s	61
Chapter Twenty-five – Leave me alone	62
Chapter Twenty-six – Happy birthday	62
Chapter Twenty-seven – The attack	66
Chapter Twenty-eight – The hospital	69
Chapter Twenty-nine – Proud of you	74
Chapter Thirty – Paul	76
Chapter Thirty-one – Finding Josh	78
Chapter Thirty-two – The doctor visits	80
Chapter Thirty-three – This is my life	81
Chapter Thirty-four – Veronica returns	82
Chapter Thirty-five – Spring	83
Chapter Thirty-six – Just like Mum used to do	88
Chapter Thirty-seven – Wake up!	88
Chapter Thirty-eight – The letter	90
Chapter Thirty-nine – Real men cry	93
Chapter Forty – The world outside my room	96
Chapter Forty-one – Together	97
During-reading questions	99
After-reading questions	101
Exercises	102
Project work	107
Glossary	108

CHAPTER ONE

Results day

DANTE

Good luck today. Hope that you get what you want and need. :)

I smiled at the text from my girlfriend, Collette – but not for long. I was too nervous. Today was A level exam results day! I only needed four good A levels and then I could go to university – a year earlier than all my friends.

My A levels were my chance for a better life, and then *after* university when I had a good job, things would be different. And my family wouldn't need to worry about money in the same way.

Where was the postman? My whole future was in his postbag. It was strange how one piece of paper was going to change the rest of my life.

Just then the doorbell rang, and I ran to the front door. It wasn't the postman.

It was Melanie – and she wasn't alone. There was a baby in a **buggy** next to her.

"Hello, Dante," she said. "C– can I come in?"

"Er – yeah. Of course."

She went into the sitting room and I followed. What did she want?

“Are you **babysitting**?” I pointed to the baby.

“That’s one way to describe it,” Melanie replied as she looked around the room at the family photos. Some were of me, more were of Adam, but most were of Mum. Dad used to take lots of photos, but after Mum died, he hadn’t used his camera again.

Melanie looked the same as ever, maybe a little slimmer, but that was all. She was wearing black jeans and a dark blue jacket over a light blue T-shirt. Her dark brown hair was shorter than before, but she was still beautiful. And she had the biggest brown eyes I had ever seen.

“What’s its name?” I asked.

“*Her* name is Emma,” she said. “Do you want to hold her?”

“Er . . . no thank you.”

Was Melanie mad? Of course I didn’t want to hold a baby. Why was she here? Where had she been since she stopped coming to school over eighteen months ago?

“I went to live with my aunt,” Melanie said, as if reading my mind. “I’m back for the day and I was close, so I thought that I’d come and say ‘hi’. I hope you don’t mind.”

I shook my head and gave a little smile.

“I’m going away today actually,” Melanie continued, “to stay with some friends who live in the north.”

“So what have you been doing?” I asked. I couldn’t think of anything else to say.

“I’ve been looking after Emma.”

“Yes, but what else have you been doing?”

Melanie gave a small smile but didn't reply, and I was **glad** when the baby started to make baby noises and broke the **silence**.

“What are your plans now you've finished your A levels?”
Melanie asked, **picking** the baby **up**.

She looked at me properly for the first time and I noticed that her eyes seemed . . . older and **sadder** than I remembered.

“If I've passed, I'm going to study history at university and then become a journalist after that. I want to write about wars and politics – important things.” After a **pause** I asked, “Whose baby is she? Is she a relative?”

Just at that moment, the baby started to cry very softly, but it sounded like the start of a bigger, longer cry.

“Her **nappy** needs changing. Hold her for a moment.”
Melanie pushed the baby at me, so I had to take it – but I held it away from me. She opened the large blue baby bag hanging on the back of the buggy and took out a yellow, **plastic** baby **mat** which she put on the **carpet**. She also took out a nappy, some baby **wipes**, and a small orange plastic bag.

She laid the baby on the plastic mat, took off its yellow **babygro** and then suddenly started saying silly things like, “Am I going to change your nappy now? Yes, I am. Oh yes, I am.” When she undid the nappy, it was completely full of smelly baby **poo** – I wanted to be sick.



“You should watch this,” Melanie said. “You might learn something.”

“Yes, but why would I want to?”

Melanie cleaned the baby’s bottom, put the dirty nappy in the plastic orange bag and then held it out to me. “Can you put this in the bin please?”

I carefully held the plastic bag away from me and ran to the kitchen, where I threw it in the bin. Melanie watched me return with a smile in her eyes.

“Mel,” I began. “Why . . .?”

“Shush,” she whispered, putting the baby back in the buggy. “She’s fallen asleep.” Then suddenly, she pulled a piece of paper from her bag.

“Read this,” she said.

I opened the document. It was a **birth certificate**.

I stared at her. “You’re the baby’s mother?”

“Dante,” she said, “I need to tell you something . . .”

Mel was only 18. Had she never heard of the **pill**?

She took a deep breath, “Dante, you’re the dad. Emma is our daughter.”

Melanie’s words hit me like a **punch** between the eyes and I felt so sick, I had to sit down. I couldn’t speak. And I couldn’t think.

How could this be true?

But now I was starting to remember things that I didn’t want to – like the Christmas party at Rick’s house almost two years ago.

Remembering that night was like looking at a series of photographs, and as the night got later, the photos became less and less clear. Melanie and I had only been going out for a couple of months at the time. At the party, we danced and drank and kissed and then drank and danced and kissed some more. Somebody shouted, “Get a room!”

So just for fun, we went upstairs and into the first room we saw. We closed the door and started kissing again.

It had been the first time – for both of us.

It was the one and only time and to be honest – it finished very, very quickly.

I remember thinking, *Is that it?*

Now that *one* little moment had turned into this.

“I don’t believe you,” I said. “My name’s not even on the birth certificate. How can you be sure the baby’s mine?”

CHAPTER TWO

Headaches

ADAM

“Another headache, Adam?” Dad looked at me as I sat at the kitchen table.

I nodded as I gently moved my fingers along the sides of my head. For the past couple of weeks, I’d had some really bad headaches.

“Take something for the pain?” my brother Dante said.

“You know I don’t believe that it’s good to take pills,” I told him.

“But you’ve got a headache,” Dante argued.

“I’m not taking any pills.”

“Time for you to go to the doctor’s,” Dad interrupted. “You’ve been having too many headaches.”

“It’s the heat,” I replied. “I just need to lie down for a while.” The only word I hated more than “doctor” was “hospital”. Just thinking about it was making me hot and uncomfortable.

“You’ve been having headaches since the match against Colliers Green School,” said Dante. “Are you sure you’re . . .?”

“Stop talking about it!”

“What match?” asked Dad.

“The ball hit Adam on the head,” said Dante. “Luckily his head is totally empty, so no damage was done.”

“Adam, you never told me that,” Dad said.

“Dad, it’s just a headache.” And now my dad and brother were making it worse.

“Put your shoes on, Adam,” Dad said. “I’m taking you to the doctor’s.”

So here I was with Dad, on my way to the doctor’s. There was nothing that I could do.

CHAPTER THREE

Boys don’t cry

DANTE

“I’ve never been with anyone except you, Dante!” Melanie’s voice was pure ice. “Don’t you ever say that again. I couldn’t put your name on the birth certificate because we’re not married and you weren’t there with me.” She looked at me angrily. “Anyway, I didn’t come here to argue with you.”

“Then why did you come?” I asked. “Why didn’t you have an **abortion**, or think about **adoption**?”

“I thought about it,” she said with **tears** in her eyes, “but from the moment that I discovered I was **pregnant** – Emma was real to me. Do you know my mum made me leave home for getting pregnant?”

“What?”