

## Chapter Eleven

That night, our school was on the news. There was the entrance that we went in every day on the screen, just by where the newsreader was standing. It had a stone over the entrance that had boys inscribed on it in curly capitals from the olden days when girls and boys had to come in through different doors. The newsreader was saying something about whether our school should be closed down or not.

I raced into Mum's room, flinging the door open so it clanged against the wall.

'Mum! Wake up! My school's on telly!'

There was a funny, stale smell in her room and the curtains were drawn although it was still light outside.

'Mum?' I sat down next to her. She just looked like a lump in the bed. She lay so still that for one moment I wondered whether, if I pulled

the covers back, I would find just a pile of cushions and realize Mum had been tricking me this whole time. Maybe she was out at the supermarket this very moment buying the ice cream we liked.

I threw back the pink blanket but there were no pillows, just Mum with her eyes tightly closed, her body compacted together as though she was making herself into a ball. I prodded her but she didn't move, so I shook her, gently at first and then with more force. She moaned and turned onto her front. I was worried she wouldn't be able to breathe if she slept face down, so I turned her back onto her side. She sighed deeply but she didn't wake.

'Mum!' I shouted. 'Mum!'

More loudly this time: 'Mum! Mum! Mum!'

Her eyes flickered and then opened.

'Ade,' she whispered. She tried to moisten her lips.

'Mum! Wake up!'

'What's wrong?'

'My school's on the news. You've got to see it.'

'Not now, Ade. Not now. Get me some water, would you?'

'But we'll miss it,' I said. Remembering what

I had heard, I added, 'And they might close the school down.'

'Oh,' Mum said, and her eyes flickered shut as she fell back to sleep.

When I came back into the sitting room, they'd stopped showing my school but they were still talking about what was happening with the buildings. It ran all night, or at least right up, to where I switched it off to go to bed. They couldn't stop talking about it.

That was when I knew that Gaia was right. People were getting scared. And the only way they would stop feeling scared would be if they woke up the next day and no more buildings had fallen down.

But it didn't happen like that. More and more fell. I saw on the news that some people had died because they'd been sleeping in their beds when the walls had fallen down around them and then their floors had given way.

Lots of people who knew all about how to make houses were on the television talking about foundations, and other people were talking about terror or something like that.

It always seemed to happen at night time, when the buildings would fall. No one had

actually *seen* it happen. We just kept waking up in the morning to find out that another and another had gone. It was beginning to look really bad from what I could see from my window. There were all these funny little patches in between the buildings now. More and more each day.

They decided to send in lots of policemen who sat in vans or walked around at night to see if they could find out what was happening. We all watched too. I could see lots of lit-up windows in the blocks around us. In a strange sort of way, I felt less lonely seeing lots of other people looking out of their windows. I wasn't the only one any more. One night I counted seventy-eight faces. We all wanted to find out what was going on.