

Chapter Thirteen

Every day, I looked for Gaia.

I could feel the knot in my stomach getting tighter and tighter until I saw her. I didn't realize that she was just as worried about me until one day she said to me, 'Maybe it's not a good idea for you to be walking about after school.'

On the news that morning, they said another five buildings had fallen. It wasn't stopping, as we had all hoped. The number of fallen buildings was getting bigger each day.

'I need to get some more food, though. We're about to run out,' I said.

Although that was what I said, I was actually starting to feel funny about being out on the streets by myself.

For one thing, I would have to walk past a lot of the buildings that had fallen down. In some of them, I knew that the people who had lived

inside them had died when the walls and floors collapsed around them.

The real reason, though, was that even though I knew the buildings only seemed to fall down at night, our streets just didn't feel safe any more. Even with the sunshine streaming down. Our little world kept changing and no one knew why.

It felt like Gaia was able to read my mind. She knew exactly what I was thinking.

'I know it always happens at night but things have changed around here,' she said. 'I just think it'd be better if you went with someone else.'

I shook my head. Mum was sleeping as much as ever. She hadn't been outside for a long time. The only other person I could ask was Michael's mum, but I'd accidentally knocked into Michael in the playground a couple of days before and he'd turned round to me, scowling. 'What you do that for?' he'd said.

'Sorry,' I said. 'It was an accident.'

'Just stay away, you hear?'

I'd never really had a conversation with Michael before, if you could call this one, and I was surprised by how quietly he spoke and how angry he sounded.

'OK,' I said.

'I don't know why my mum is looking out for you, but I'm not your friend, all right?'

'OK,' I said again, unsure of what else to say.

'Don't cry, Ade,' Michael said, and he walked off.

I wasn't going to cry but I did feel surprised. Shocked, I suppose. I knew Michael wasn't that keen on me but I didn't realize how much he disliked me.

Gaia said he wasn't worth the brain space but I saw her trip him up on purpose as he walked past in the dining hall.

'Sorry,' she said sweetly, and Michael just scowled in much the same way as he'd scowled at me.

So I wasn't about to start asking his mum for favours.

'Mum's not great at the moment,' I told Gaia.

'I didn't mean your mum,' Gaia said, her eyes shining. 'I'll come with you.'

'No,' I said. I think I shouted it. The last thing I wanted was Gaia close to the fallen buildings. It was funny that we both had the same

strong feeling that we should stay away from them if we could.

'Anyway,' I went on, 'your mum and dad wouldn't let you.'

Gaia smiled.

'They don't have to know,' she said.