

## Chapter Eighteen

We had PE outside and threw brightly coloured balls to each other, standing in long lines across the playground. Gaia said that she had a stomach ache so she sat on the wall watching us. She kept pulling her sleeves down so they came over her wrists and her hands and then wrapping her arms around her like she was cold, even though it was another hot, sunny, airless day.

By lunch time she seemed to be feeling a little better. She ate a couple of mouthfuls from her plate, chewing steadily and staring into the distance, and then she turned to me suddenly and said, 'So, what do you think they're going to do now those men have died?'

'I don't know. They don't know how they died. I watched the news all night. They just said the same thing again and again. That their deaths were being treated as suspicious.'

'I don't think someone killed them,' Gaia said.

I looked at her questioningly.

'If no one killed them, how did they die?'

'I think,' Gaia continued, and she lowered her voice to a whisper, 'I think it had something to do with the buildings.'

'The buildings?'

'We had a bad feeling about them for a reason. I think there's something wrong with them,' she said.

'But how could a fallen-down building kill two men just by them standing next to it?'

'I don't know what's wrong with them, Adeola. I'm just saying I think they're something to do with it.'

Gaia looked cross for a moment. Then her face changed. She looked very worried.

'And I definitely don't think we should get close to them again,' she said. 'You won't, will you - go close to one again? I can always bring you some food from my house so you don't have to go to the shops.'

I knew what Gaia meant about having a bad feeling about the fallen buildings, but then we'd walked past them last night and we

were fine now, so I wasn't sure she was right.

'Ade? Do you promise me? Don't go anywhere near them.'

'OK,' I said.

It seemed better to agree with her than to make her panic. I didn't let on that I'd forgotten to get any milk last night and what we had left in the fridge had gone lumpy and sour-smelling. I just wouldn't tell her that I was going back to the shops tonight.

That way, I wouldn't worry her.

That evening there were lots and lots of policemen on the street. Some of them were standing in a line in front of the fallen buildings and others were walking around, with large, pointy-nosed Alsations that were sniffing the pavements and the walls.

I decided to go to the closest newsagent, which was only a little shop but which had a fridge with pints of cold milk in it. It wasn't very far away. I had to go the same route as I had taken with Gaia the day before but I didn't stop to look at the buildings at all today. I hurried past the line of policemen that surrounded the area where the two men had been found. Finally I made it into the shop and bought a large

bottle of milk so it would last us a bit longer.

'Be careful out there, sonny,' the shopkeeper said as he passed me my change. He looked out of the window as though he expected something to happen any moment. The bottle felt cold in my hands but I didn't wait for a bag. I wanted to get home as quickly as I could. Now that I was out on the streets, I was starting to feel more and more like Gaia was right, that I shouldn't have come out. I don't know if it was because of what Gaia had told me or if there really was something in the air, something menacing out there that said, *No one is safe.*

I decided I would run back to my tower. I could almost picture in my head exactly what was going to happen in the next few minutes. I would run down the road, turn off down the first street and sprint past the policemen and then run in a straight line to my tower, open the door and bang it behind me.

The door would go, *Slam!* No problems. I'd be safe.