

She doesn't believe it. It's just a story she's telling him, to ease the goodbye, and my heart's breaking – cleaving right in two – because I know this might actually be it. The last time she pulls me close, kisses me. The last time I can hug her, my arms so tight against her thin frame, to let her know just how much she means to us.

She runs her fingers along my cheeks. “Are you ready, Juniper berry?”

“Yes.”

“Your bag's not too heavy?”

“No.”

“Come, then.” Annie Rose pulls Bear back a safe distance and I swing Grandpa Edward's axe against the pane. I watch the glass shatter.

We're walking across the Buffer, Bear's hand small and hot in mine. “Shall we run, Ju?”

“No, let's just walk fast. We don't want to trip.”

I hadn't thought through the terrain – the rocks and blocks of concrete that Border Patrol have strewn over everything. It's hard to get a footing. You could stumble. Turn your ankle. No doubt that's what they want, if they ever imagined anyone would be crazy enough to try and cross.

“Are we crazy, Bear?” I ask, looking down at him for some confirmation of sanity from my six-year-old brother, dutifully trotting by my side.

“I think we should run, Ju,” he says, gazing back over his shoulder.

You can see the smoke funnelling up into the sky and the glow of the flames leaping up, capricious. I never saw