

have been a garden. Now the separate plots are all growing back into one. The walls are crumbling down. Even the metal is rusting away. One day it will all be powder. And somewhere, in the thickness of everything, in the depths and in the shadows, there will be the ticks.

31

"I'm still hungry, Ju. Can I have a snack bar?"

"I don't know, Bear. I think we should save them."

"We've got loads."

"We have to make them last."

He pulls a face at me.

I know what I have to do. I should have done it last night.

I should have set the trap — let it work while we slept. It's not the trapping that bothers me, it's what comes next. It's the palm under the rabbit's chin, the pressing back of the neck. It's the snap. That's the bit I'm not sure I can do.

The meat we ate back in the city wasn't ever alive. Not really. It was grown in a lab somewhere.

"Let's walk for a bit, Bear," I say, stalling. "Then you can have a snack. And tonight for tea we'll catch something. Some meat. That's what you need to fill your tummy."

I thought it would feel different out here. I'd assume