

spare one? And look at this fire compared to ours! I'm properly warm for the first time since we left, Bear. She's the first person we've come across. The only one. We need help."

"I don't want her help."

I glare at him. "Yeah, well maybe we need it. I can't do everything. I can't do it alone."

Bear looks shocked. "You're not alone. There's me, and Ghost."

"You're six years old, Bear. And a wild cat isn't going to feed us. It won't show us the way to Ennerdale."

"Ju!" he cries. "Don't say that! It's secret! The woman might be listening."

I roll my eyes. "Violet's gone hunting, Bear. For our breakfast."

"There's something funny about her. Strange."

I give him a disapproving look. "She's just a bit unkempt," I say. "People used to say that about you, back in the city."

Bear sticks his tongue out. "It's not that."

"Look, she's survived out here. All this time! She knows the land, she knows what to eat. She knows how to stay alive, Bear. She's properly wild."

"Not all wild is good."

I can't help smile at him using my own words against me. "Let's at least let her feed us. There are things I want to ask her."

"Not about where we're going, Ju. You can't! You mustn't!" There's proper fear in his voice.

"I won't say the name, I'll just ask her if she's heard of any place like that."

"Why?"

I shake my head. How can I tell him what's in my head? That since we got out here, since we saw how abandoned everything is, I can't stop thinking about it. About Ennerdale. What if it's not there any more?

"Ju, please!" Bear comes up to me and tugs at my hands again. "She was different before you showed up."

"What do you mean?"

"What she said, about being worried about me, she wasn't, Ju. She really wasn't. She was mean. She kept prodding me, asking where you were."

"Because she wanted to find me, Bear. For your sake. You're six years old. Out here alone. You must have been a shock to her."

"But she didn't look shocked, Ju. It was like she was looking for me. Hunting me."

"Bear!" I exclaim, exasperated. "She doesn't hunt people. She hunts animals. Rabbits. I spent almost twenty-four hours straight looking for you. I'm exhausted! Please, Bear."

He finally shuts up and I slump back into the sofa, gazing at the fire, at the dancing flames. Hypnotized by them. Bear's still pacing and I let him. I did enough of that last night.