

It's morning and the air we're walking through is different, all white and opaque.

Bear makes this low eerie screech.

"Don't do that!" I snap.

You got fog in the city too. They couldn't keep it away, the air there's so thick with pollution and even though I knew that's what it was – clogged-up city air – I liked it anyway because it hid everything ugly. Fog's a different matter out here.

"It's just ground cloud. It's water. Look, we can drink it."

Bear opens his mouth and gapes in towards me.

I pull a face. "That's really not helping, OK?"

"You're weird," he says, running off, and in an instant he's vanished.

"Bear! Bear!" For a moment everything's silent, like the fog's taken everything away, even the sounds. I listen for

Bear's footsteps, but there's nothing. "Bear!"

A mass of fur appears beside me, brushing my fingertips. Ghost.

"Bear!" I yell.

"Boo!" he says, suddenly right in front of me. "Wooooah! Wooooah! I'm a ghost!" He stops when he sees my face.

I'm screaming at him now. "Never do that, OK! Don't you ever disappear again!"

Bear's face falls. "I was just playing. Hide-and-seek, like we've always done."

"We're not in the Palm House any more!"

He looks at me, puzzled.

"You have to stay right by me. All the time!"

"Why don't you trust me?"

"I do, but you're only—"

"Six!" he shouts in my face, before turning away. "I know! You tell me all the time."

For a while we walk on in silence. We're on a road, one of the big ones. A motorway. At least with the fog we don't have to worry about being too visible and you can't deny the road makes the journey easier. There aren't so many trailing loops of bramble. You don't keep having to duck down to miss tree branches.

We're walking uphill, but for some reason I don't cotton on that we're on a bridge. A high one. We see the buildings suddenly, all at once, looming up to the side of us and