

underneath us too because we're already at the highest point of the bridge. And it's not water we're crossing – it's the city itself.

We're on this overpass with great towers either side – soaring chimneys, vast metal warehouses.

"Juniper!" Bear cries. "What shall we do?" He's rooted to the spot and it's way too near the edge. Maybe there were barriers once, but there aren't any now. The sides of the road drop away to nothing.

"Get away from the edge!" I yell.

"It's a city!" Bear cries as the shapes start to make sense to him. "Ju, we walked into a city!"

It's a city, but there was no Buffer. That means something. I pull Bear to the centre of the road. "It's not a city now."

As the fog clears a little – maybe as we've risen above it – we can see more of the buildings around us. Green, not grey. All tangled up in climbers and creepers.

"Why didn't it show up on the GPS?" Bear asks.

"Maybe none of those cities show up any more. Maybe the GPS was wiped after the ReWild."

You aren't meant to talk about the lost cities. The ones the authorities abandoned. They abandoned lots of places, but it's the big ones they want you to shut up about. The seven largest cities that were forsaken. The ones that were too big, too sprawling to contain.

"Which city is it?" Bear asks.

"I don't know. It'd be on Mum's map. I should've been looking at that too."

Beyond the chimneys for miles, for literally miles and miles, you can see buildings. Tower blocks. Houses. A huge great sprawl of them. It takes your breath away.

If you look closely there are trees too, in and among them.

"Were there really enough people to fill it?" Bear asks in astonishment.

"I suppose there must have been. Once." I think of Silvan's face, when he talked about the disease. And what I wrote in my essay – 'the beauty of the disease' – like I had any clue. Any clue what I was talking about.

Where are all the people who live here now? How many survived?

"It's a ghost city," Bear says.

"I'm not sure that's very flattering to Ghost." I turn to look at her. The one bit of gold in the tangled-up concrete and steel.

"She doesn't mind," Bear says. "She doesn't understand what we're saying. Anyway, don't you like it, Ju? There are trees."

"It's not a matter of liking, it just makes me sad. It's, you know –" I pause, trying to find the right word – "bleak."

"You said our city was bleak too."

"It was. Is. But in a different way."