

old things. It's mostly just rubbish – old drinks cans and bottles, things we would recycle. I guess that's something our city does right.

"Anything useful," I reply. "Clothes or blankets. Maybe there's an old suitcase somewhere with those kinds of things." I'm checking all the glass bottles too because they'd hold water, especially if we find some with their screw tops left on.

I'm still cross with myself for leaving that big bottle on the riverbank. Even though there's been no sign of drones since the fire, I'm nervous every time we have to go for water.

Bear's scampering ahead. He's more excited about the insects than the human things. He finds a nest of ladybirds.

"Ju, they're hibernating! Look!"

They're huddled together in a corner of a seat. Bright red bugs with black spots.

"Don't wake them, Bear," I say, already wandering on ahead as he counts the dots on each beetle.

At the end of the carriage we're in is a bulging-out section of train. It's closed off and I'm wondering if there's a way to kick the door open as it's not like the cottage door – this one's thick solid plastic. Bear comes up behind me and turns the handle. The door swings right open.

"Jackpot!" I squeal.

"I can't see a suitcase," Bear says. "It's just cleaning things."

He kicks an old mop and it clatters to the floor.

"Look at those, Bear." I point to the corner, where there's a teetering stack of metal buckets. "Just think how much water they'd carry."

We clank down to the river with some of the buckets and bottles, and we clean them out, then make trips to and from the carriage. Soon we have all the water we can drink, and some left over too, to clean our teeth in and to heat so we can make an attempt at washing.

Bear's sloshing behind me back to the carriage, a bucket in either hand, even though I said he should just carry one.

"We've probably got enough now. This is the last trip." I turn back. Bear's put the buckets down and is turning something over in his fingers.

I walk back to him. "What's that?"

He shrugs. He's holding a bundle of twigs, tied up with an old piece of blue cotton.

"I found it in that tree."

Where he's pointing, the lowest tree branch comes out from the trunk and there are three wavy lines carved into the bark. An arrow points in the direction we've come from.

We both speak at the same time.

"River," Bear says.

"A signpost," I say.

I have this tingly feeling on the back of my neck. It's the