

"I don't want to hear that word," the man hisses. "Not ever again. You want to get me into trouble? Is that why you came?"

He rushes down the steps towards me and I stumble backwards, my heart tripping over itself as his face is suddenly against mine. His skin yellow, his eyes red – shot through with burst blood vessels that are running with fury.

"No!" I shake my head, frightened. "I don't want any trouble!"

"You swear!"

"I promise!"

"This way," he orders.

I scabble after him up the steps and out of the back door – the padlock has been opened now. "They had proper meat, didn't they?" I say breathlessly as we enter a narrow alleyway. "Real meat from real animals."

"And?" he snarls.

"But how? Do people go out there? Do you?"

Silvan stops and turns to glare at me. "Are you stupid? Surely you know the answer to that."

He turns his wrists over to the white undersides, where there's no ink but the skin's coloured anyway. His own veins and arteries – blue and purple and protruding. "I can't, can I? I haven't got it. You think I'd be here if I did? I don't know what you want from me, but I'm not on your side,

OK? Whatever you think I am, I'm not that any more."

He moves on and my heart's racing but I keep following anyway. There's a way out of the city here and air rifles too. I'm sure of that now.

Sometimes Silvan glances round and glares at me, but I keep on after him round more twists and turns of the Warren, the walls tagged and painted with *The End Is Nigh* kind of slogans and SOS, like on our journey box. Except here it's scrawled in red paint, like blood.

At one point Silvan stops to catch his breath in front of a wall where a tree's painted. Simple, the way Bear would draw it – a brown trunk, branches splitting out and upwards, and then leaves and nuts in little cup cases.

"It's an oak," I say, catching up with him. Silvan nods and I can tell he's impressed.

The Warren might be crowded and dirty and noisy, but somehow it's alive in a way the rest of the city isn't.

The house Silvan stops at is one of the original stone ones. He stands on the doorstep and turns to confront me again. "So I take it you're coming in, oak girl, seeing as I can't seem to shake you off."

I nod my head.

There's a staircase in the hallway with an old wooden balustrade. I think we're going to go up, but Silvan carries right along the hall to the back of the house where the garden would have been. When he opens the door, I still