

"They're just pictures," I say through gritted teeth. I think of Etienne, striking that match back in the city, setting the warehouse alight so Bear and I could escape.

"I don't understand," Bear says, tears trickling down his cheeks.

"Let the drones see everything burn. They'll think we're burning too. Two kids, playing with matches. Accidents happen."

"Jul!" Bear watches, terrified, as I throw the match right into the centre of the crate. One, then another, then another. The crates break open with light.

Bear looks at me like he doesn't even recognize me.

"Come on," I beckon. "We've got to move."

And he follows after me through the door, away from the blazing box and the spiralling grey smoke that twirls out from it.

All that colour in the pictures and when they burn the smoke just comes out black.

"We have to be fast and quiet, OK?" I say, trying to sound in control. "We stay under the trees for cover. We stay hidden." I can hear Ms Endo's voice in my head, all kind and clear. *Camouflage. That's what you could learn from the Sticks.*

Bear's trembling, but his eyes are big and focused. This is our chance. We have to slip away unseen.



The light on the GPS is low, a faint glimmer, just enough to see which way the arrow's pointing.

We're on the run again and we have to be as dark as the night itself. Like ghosts, sliding through it.

"Ju, I'm thirsty!" Bear whispers beside me. He's coughing. It's too dark to see the smoke, but we can smell it. It's in the air all around us. I hand the bottle to Bear and we walk on.

At some point, I take Bear's rucksack off him and strap it to my front and I hold his hand to lead him on, keep him going. Just a few more steps and then a few more after that because as tired as I am, as much as every bit of me hurts, we have to get as far away as we can while the drones have something else to watch.

There are dim shapes above our heads. Bats, I think, because the air is thick with high-pitched clicks or squeaks. Sometimes there's the screech of an owl, or the cry of a fox. You'd think it would all be scary, but somehow it's not. Everything alive is another layer of the forest around us, keeping the drones away.

We can't walk all night though and eventually we don't have a choice. We have to stop before we crash. It's just like that first night again, except we don't look for clearings now, we sleep in partings of undergrowth. I throw out the groundsheet and roll out our sleeping bags for us to collapse down into oblivion.