



Chapter 1

It is Sunday evening and Rey and I are hiding in the coat cupboard. It smells like feet and boot polish and coat wax and the weather.

I can hear Lissa calling and I sink back into the rails and let myself be swallowed by the scent of seasons. The wool scratches my skin like an army of tiny knitted ants but I don't wriggle away. I hold my finger up to my lips to make sure Rey keeps still but I don't need to worry because Rey hates Sundays just as much as I do.

Sunday evenings are bad for lots of reasons. One of them is that it's bath night, which takes about four years and the bathroom floor gets cleaner than most of us do.

Another reason Sunday is bad is that supper is leftovers night, which means cabbage and potatoes



and something grey and gristly that might be mouse. We've never seen an actual mouse but Alice swears she got a tail in her bowl once. I always pick around the maybe-mouse with my spoon just in case and Lissa tuts because I'm wasting food. Rey always eats everything and says it's delicious.

Rey rolls in the pile of gloves and stares up at the dark ceiling. She's holding a book because Rey is always holding a book even when there's no light to see the pages. She holds them close to her chest like the words will seep into her bones. She knows a million things but she never really says them out loud because Rey doesn't like to talk that much. She can talk, even if sometimes Alex is mean and calls her a mute. She just doesn't feel the need very often and that's OK because I always know what she wants and needs and thinks anyway. Sometimes she'll burst open and she'll say something so brilliant and so true that it's like a firework or the sun appearing suddenly from the darkest sky. But that hardly ever happens. She's quiet and she's shy and funny and she's the best person in the whole world and even though I don't know many people I still know that's true.



I can hear the bath running and the mop squeaking outside. Or maybe it's Lissa catching mice for tea. Sunday sounds seep under the door and I try to pretend we're anywhere but a crumbling damp house filled with Found children and anywhere but on the edge of the misty wildlands and somewhere where we are wanted and somewhere where we belong. Rey turns the pages of her book.

I close my eyes tight and try to imagine. I dissolve my thoughts and I sink down and down into my mind and I am very nearly far away and somewhere else and somewhere better.

Imagine I whisper. Imagine that we're on top of an icy cold mountain far away and it's just the two of us and ...

But then the shadows shift and the light comes rushing in.





Chapter 2

I peer up as Lissa opens the coat cupboard door. The smell of the house streams in. Old cabbage and wet floors and too many children. She puts her hands on her hips like a cross mother in a storybook but she's not actually cross and she's not our mother and this isn't a story.

Up and out please, Rey. I can see you under those gloves, you know she says and I think maybe there's a little tickle of laughter in her voice but she's swallowing it down.

Rey sticks her head out of the pile and there are at least three gloves caught in her wild tangle of hair. She grins at Lissa and clambers out of the pile but I stay still as a statue.

Fen, you're not invisible Lissa says. *Out please or there'll be no tea left for you before the gannets have it all.*



Oh no not Sunday tea that would be awful I mutter
but I pull myself out of the coats and Rey and I leave
the lovely quiet dark of the coat cupboard and trudge
down the corridor into the kitchen for mouse soup
and letters.

That's the other terrible thing about Sundays.

We're meant to write to our mothers.

And Rey and I don't have one.

