



CHAPTER 1

ELEVEN MILES AWAY

Pain shot up my back as I ran past the abandoned cars. I was desperate for Esme to take the hurt away, but I couldn't ask her out here. I needed to wait until we were somewhere more private.

Someone once told me you can still see the dead bodies inside the old cars, forty years after they all got stuck. I never look in the windows just in case it's true.

The last streaks of blue were fading from the sky. We needed to find shelter before it got dark.

I could see a large letter ‘M’ on top of a long pole ahead of us. I’d seen a few of those before. They were the symbol of an old restaurant called ‘McDonald’s’ that was popular before the great virus.

“Let’s try that, Abbie,” said Esme. “It could be a hostel.”

She raced up the slip road and I hobbled after her. The pain in my back was making me dizzy. We’d gone too far for one day. We should have stopped in the shed a few miles back, but we needed food, and we had to reach a hostel for that.

There were three buildings underneath the large plastic ‘M’. One had a long roof, and this used to be a ‘petrol station’. Cars would stop there and fill with fuel so they could keep going. The square one would have been a shop, selling crisps and chocolate and magazines. The one on the right with the red roof would have been the McDonald’s. Cars used to drive around and