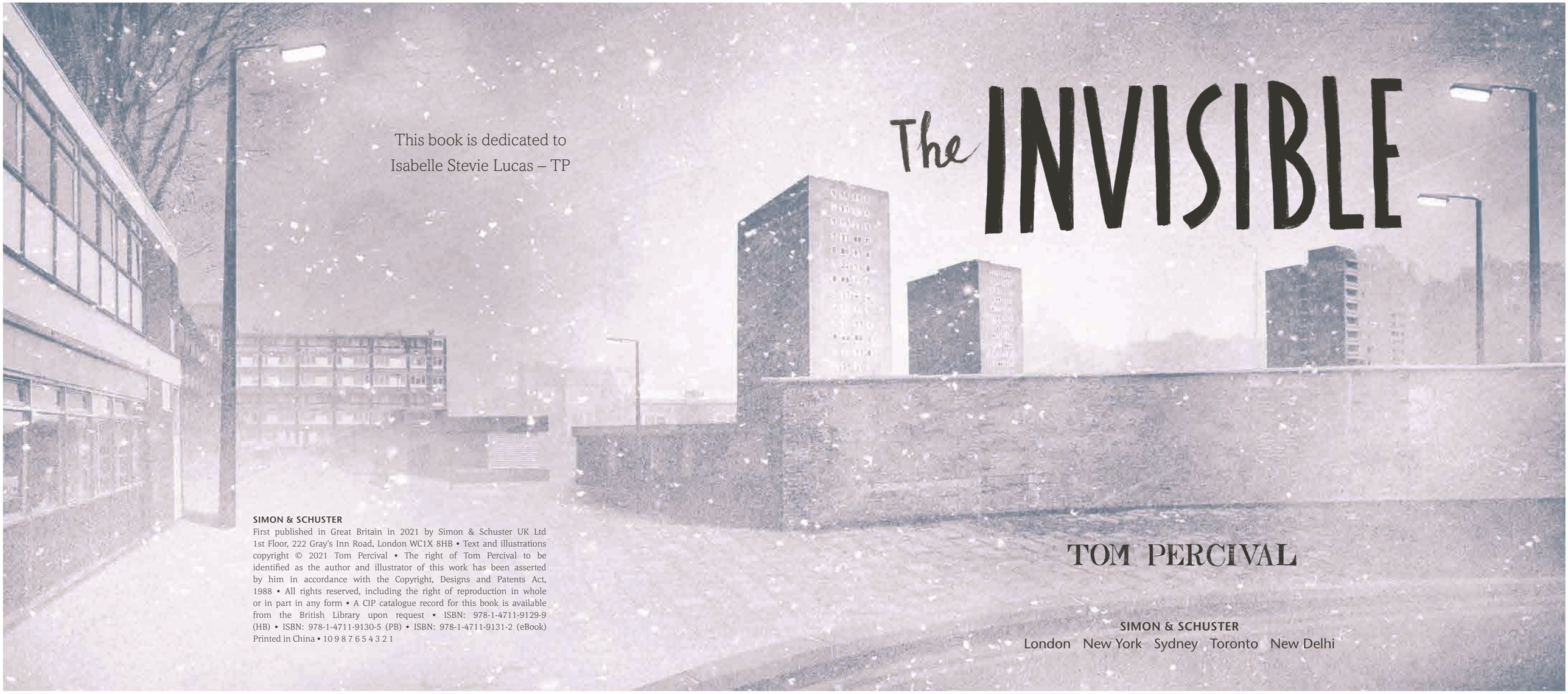
The INVISIBLE





The INVISIBLE

TOM PERCIVAL

This book is dedicated to
Isabelle Stevie Lucas – TP

SIMON & SCHUSTER
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Isabel pulled on her
favourite jumper.



Ice curled across the inside of the window
and crept up the corner of her bedpost.

It was very beautiful,
and Isabel *always* noticed
beautiful things.

But there was no escaping
the fact that it was also cold.

Very cold.



You see, Isabel's family couldn't afford to have the heating on.

Isabel's family couldn't afford a lot of things.





Things that some people take for granted.

But Isabel tried not to worry about the things she didn't have.

A Note from the Author

My earliest memory is of peering into a small cupboard in a caravan. I didn't know it at the time, but that caravan in rural South Shropshire was going to be my home for the next six years.

The caravan was old and the doors made a hollow, unsatisfying sound as you closed them. We had no television, we weren't connected to the mains electricity grid and we had gas lamps on the wall that you lit with a match. We got our drinking water from a spring in the garden, which was all well and good until the day we found a dead frog in it.

I shared a small room in the caravan with my older brother and I can still picture the ice glistening on the metal bedposts on cold winter mornings. In the depths of winter, it was literally freezing.

So, why did we live this way? In short, because we were poor.

However, despite our lack of money, despite the jumble sale clothes and hand-me-down shoes, there were two things that I had plenty of – love and books.

There was a mobile library service which parked up nearby. I would walk down the road clutching my pink library slips and be GIVEN as many books as I needed. But some people aren't as lucky as I was. Some people don't have access to that literary lifeline and the beauty and wonder of the countryside that I had free rein over as a child. Some people don't have love.

This is why I wanted to write Isabel's story. As of today, there are around four million children living in poverty in the UK*. That's over four million children who don't get enough food to eat, who are cold and tired, who don't have the equipment they need at school, who don't have the same chances and opportunities as everyone else. These children are often ignored, which is why I wanted to explore the idea of invisibility in this story.

Of course, poverty isn't the only way in which people get overlooked by society; there are many ways that the world has of saying "you don't belong here".

I wanted to try to counter that. I wanted to say "yes, you DO belong".

We all belong here.

Tom Percival
February 2020

* Child poverty facts and figures, The Children's Society website, UK