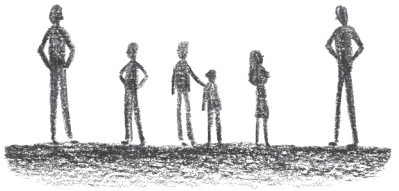
FRANZ FERDINAND



She'd been teaching us about World War One, and the soldiers in the trenches whose feet got rotten, and the rats as big as cats that tried to eat the dead bodies. Ahmed said the soldiers should've eaten the rats, and Jayden Nesbitt said he *would* say that, so Ahmed said, 'What's that supposed to mean?'

Jayden said, 'You know what that means,' and called him a dirty word.

And Mrs King said that was enough and that no one ate anyone and that this kind of attitude was how world wars started. So Ahmed said actually she'd said some man called Franz Ferdinand getting shot was what started the war.

Mrs King said, 'Not "some man". He was the Archduke, Ahmed. And Franz Ferdinand was just the tipping point. The arguing was the build-up. Wars don't come from nowhere.'

And then no one spoke for a bit and the air in the room felt fat and dangerous because we all knew war might be coming again. It'd been on the news. We weren't allowed news in our house because of most of it being fake, but Ahmed told me, so I knew too. Sam didn't; he was only five and he mainly cared about Marvel and DC and dinosaurs, but I was ten and old enough for truth, least I thought so. Like I knew Cassius Barker from our class hadn't moved school, he'd been sent to his uncle in Trinidad because it was safer there. And I knew that Olivia Mikkelsen who used to work with Dad at Albion Interception had gone back to Denmark. And I knew that the Patels from number forty-four had gone to Bangladesh and all.

And I knew that the war wouldn't be loud and clattering with guns and bombs and trenches this time, it would be stealthy and silent and sneak in at night when you weren't expecting it.