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ONJALI Q. RAÚF

# Hope on the Horizon

A CHILDREN'S HANDBOOK ON EMPATHY, KINDNESS & MAKING A BETTER WORLD

ILLUSTRATED BY ISOBEL LUNDIE
COVER ILLUSTRATION BY PIPPA CURNICK

wren & rook

# A little note to my lovely readers

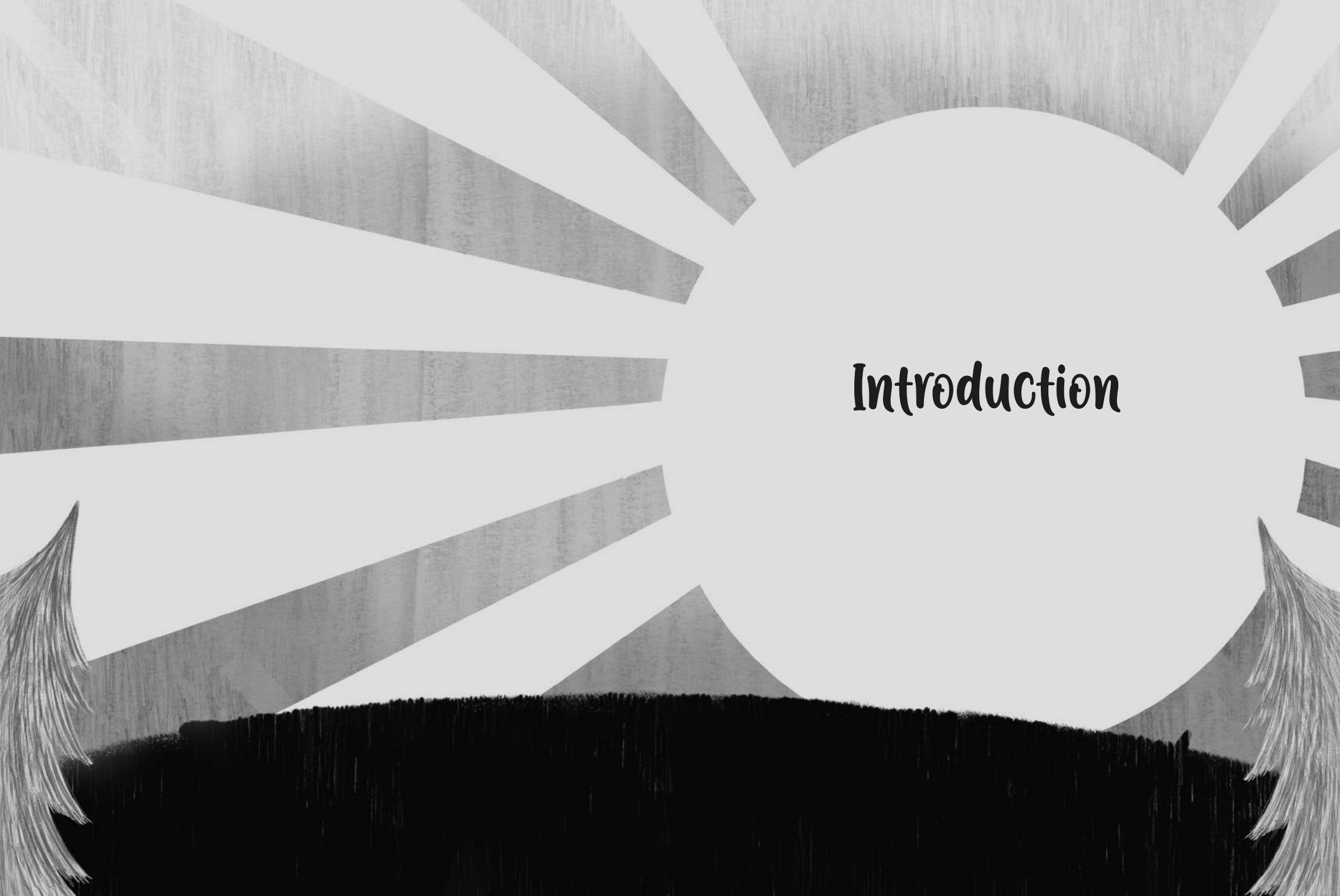
Before we get started on this adventure together, it's important for you to know that I will occasionally be highlighting some incredibly difficult issues which exist in our world — issues which I wish didn't exist, but which sadly do.

If you find yourself, at any moment, becoming upset or anxious over anything I write about, please don't hesitate to ask your most favourite and trusted grown-up — be they at home or at school — any questions you may have.

Or if you don't want to do that, skip the paragraph(s) completely, and start on another. No one will know, and even if someone did run right over to tell me, I wouldn't mind in the slightest! (In fact, I would give you a personal round of applause and a big hug for skipping over the bits you aren't quite ready for.)

If you, or someone you love, is also experiencing something I highlight, please turn to the very end of the book, where you can find special numbers to call some wonderful people, who are all waiting to help.





# Introduction

# WHY, HELLO THERE.

# YOU'RE RATHER WONDERFUL, AREN'T YOU?

(The correct answer to that would be some form of 'Yup, of course I am'. To which I would zap my way over to you if teleportation was real and give you a bone-squishing hug — come ON, World of Physics, what's taking so long?)

I know for a fact you are Rather Wonderful because *you* (yup, *YOU!*) — one of this planet's Most Precious Human People, made up of so many nerve endings, muscles and atomic matter that it boggles my mind — have physically reached up (or down, or over, or across something) to not only wrap your brilliant fingers around this book cover, but actually flick open the pages to read these words.

And not only are you really Rather Wonderful — but I'm also going to make a guess and say that you're A Thinker too. That's someone who uses all the fizzing wires in their brains to notice things going on around them, and to think and ponder and wonder and maybe even worry about why certain things happen — or what could be done to help change the world for the better.



But that's enough guesswork.

I want to find out a little more about you! I mean the *really* important stuff that will let me know if we're set to be book-friends for life. It'll take just two minutes, I promise.
Ready?

If you have one to hand, grab a notebook to write down your answers, or just conjure your responses up in your head, or even whisper them out loud if you fancy it. Whichever way you choose to answer them will be as perfect as can be.

# ALL ABOUT YOU

1. **Firstly, what is your name?** (I know, SUCH an easy question! But it's the starting point for all friendships, so it's incredibly special and important.)

2. **How old are you?** (If you are a day over 115, I shall be very impressed.)

3. **When you were five years old, what was your favourite thing to eat in the whole wide world?** (Mine was two crisps with a piece of chocolate in the middle: in other words, a chocolate crisp sandwich! Yum!)

4. **Do you have a happy place** (real or imaginary, both count!) **— and what makes you feel happiest?**

5. **Do you ever get worried or confused or sad sometimes about things happening in our world?**



6. **If you had to pick THREE things you worry about, or think about, the most, what would they be?** (It could be something to do with school, or home, or your town. Or maybe it's a global issue you've heard about on the news. Feel free to tap the side of your head to get those worries out if that helps . . .)

7. **Do your worries sometimes feel too big or too difficult to do anything about?**

8. **Are there any causes you feel passionate about and that make you feel super fired up when you think about them?** For example, do you love animals and want to help protect them? Or does the thought of people who are having to live without a house make you want to do something to help? Or maybe you don't like seeing other people being bullied for who they are, and you want to stop it? Why not make a list of all the things you care about and are passionate about — and yes, you can definitely have more than one (I know I do!).

9. **If you could change one thing about the world, right this second, what would it be?**

10. **On a scale of 1 to 50,000** (with 1 being the lowest and least annoying and 50,000 being the highest level of annoying it is humanly possible to be), **how annoying are grown-ups?**

11. **And finally, do you think I've asked too many questions?** (You can write, think or whisper out one of the following three answers.)

YUP

NOPE

IS THIS OVER YET?



PHEW! Well, that got my brain whirring, and I'm sure it's got that incredible head of yours thinking too.

So why am I asking you all these questions?

Well, this is a book about hope, change and making a difference. But if we're going to make the world a better place, first we have to think about the things we don't like about it, the things that we worry about and the things we might feel powerless to change. Because funnily enough, it's those very things which spark the fires in our bellies and makes us want to get up, take action and transform all those frustrations into something good and wonderful.

And by the way, if you've answered a big fat YES to the questions about being worried or sometimes feeling as if everything is too big and difficult to do anything about, then you and I have something in common!

Because I worry a lot too — about the world and all the things happening in it that shouldn't be allowed to happen at all. And I am always wishing I could do more. So you are not alone. Especially as there are *millions* of people of all ages and from all different walks of life who are worrying and wishing too.

## BUT I HAVE GOOD NEWS!

Because, as you will see from the following chapters, worrying and wishing is a great and wonderful thing! It's a *gift* — it means you ***care***. And every single person who has ever done anything to change our world for the better began exactly where you are now — with worrying and wishing and caring enough to get up and do something about it. And with just a bit of compassion, lots of hope and sprinkles of even the smallest acts of kindness, BIG — nay, GIANT — things can happen to turn those worries and cares into amazing things. I PROMISE. (I only make promises I can keep — especially the ones I make in writing. So this one is a 100% guaranteed, no-returns-ever-needed kind of promise.)

Now I guess it's my turn to share a few things about me and why I'm here typing out these words to you. So here goes . . .



# ABOUT ME

1. **I'm Onjali** (hello again). That's pronounced On-jelly. (And yes, I do love jelly. Strawberry flavoured, if you please.)

2. **According to government and hospital records, I'm old enough to be an Actual Real Grown-Up** (yuck! Ugh! Gross!). But don't worry. Even though I'm older than you, I'm definitely *not* wiser than you (psssssst: 99% of grown-ups aren't wise at all. But sssssssh! They don't want you to know that, so let's keep it a secret).

3. **I've been an activist and a feminist from the age of seven.** I am now Quite A Bit Older, which means I have been campaigning and marching and fundraising and petitioning for the things I care about for many, many, many years. So I know what it's like to feel frustrated at the Grown-Up World for taking too long and moving too slowly to make the world a better place.

If you're not sure what an **ACTIVIST** or a **FEMINIST** is, don't worry.

**An activist** is basically someone who deeply cares about making a difference and campaigns to change things — for example, you might be a climate activist and campaign to help prevent CLIMATE CHANGE or you might be a chocolate activist and campaign for all children to get chocolate every day of the year. (WARNING: I love chocolate because it is pretty much the best thing on Planet Earth. So this may come up a number of times in this book. Whenever it does, just nod along or, if you agree, give the book or air around you a high-five.)

**A feminist** is someone who believes men and women should be treated equally in **all** aspects of life. That means believing that all girls should have the same rights and the same access to schools and education and life choices as boys, and believing that women should have equal rights, equal voting and political powers, equal choices, equal pay (did you know that most women around the world are still not paid the same as men for doing the exact same jobs — not even in the UK!) and the same freedoms and opportunities as men. Anyone who believes any of the above is a feminist. I think it's one of the most awesome words to exist and hope you do too!



**4. I get very upset when people are unkind or cruel to others** because they disagree with them or they think those people are 'different' or not as powerful or as important as them. The truth is that every single one of us is different. We are all unique and rather amazing and, thankfully, we aren't exact clones of each other (can you imagine how BORING life would be if that was the case? Yawn). Our differences and uniqueness are what make the world so beautiful. But sadly, INJUSTICE (that's when people are treated unfairly) happens when differences aren't respected and people are treated badly or are even made to feel hated for being who they are.

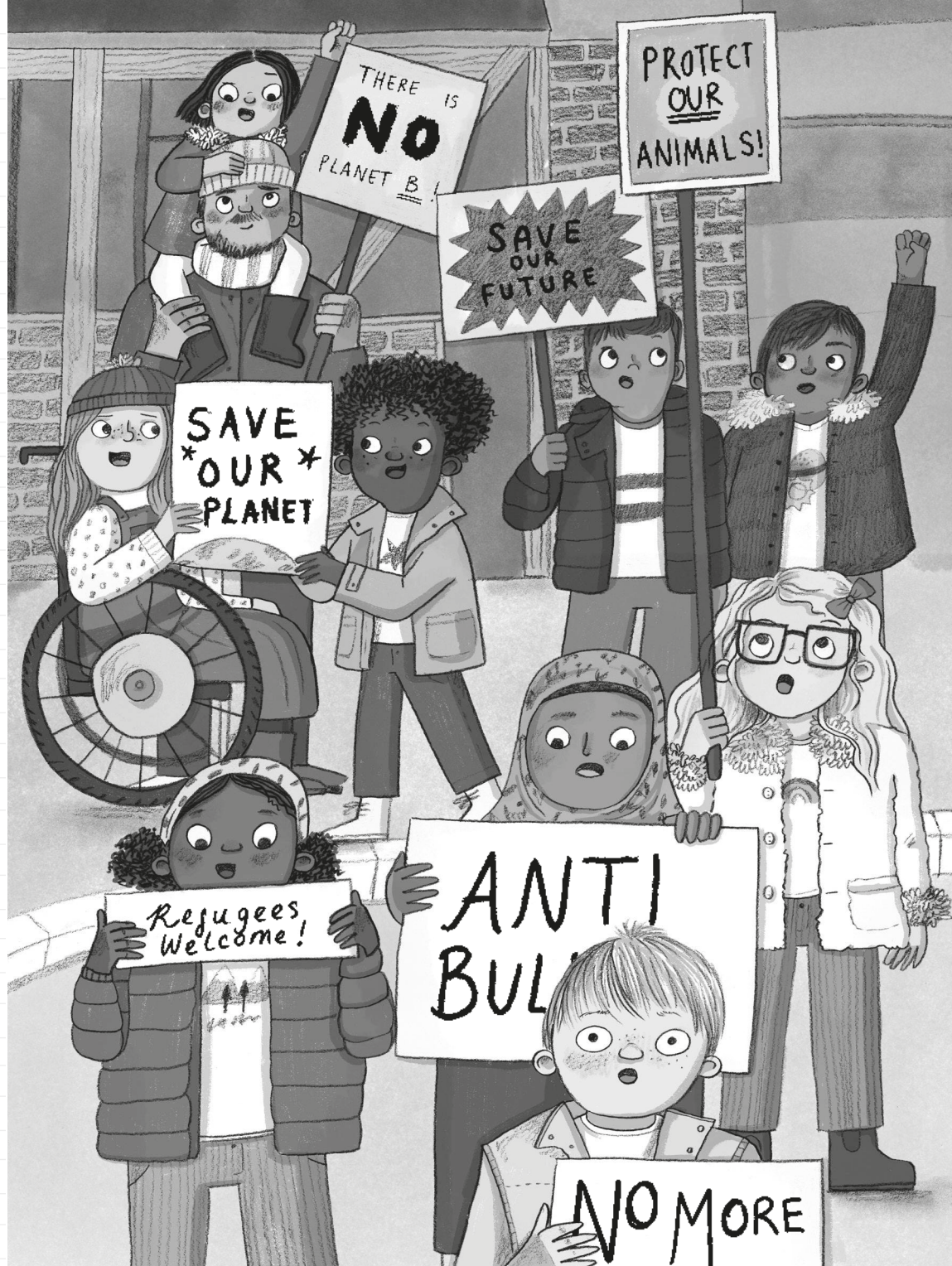
For example, I have beautiful brown skin and can speak and write not just in English but in Bengali too. I also choose to wear lovely coloured scarves on my head to symbolise my religious faith. But sometimes at school, and lots of times even as a grown-up, I have been made fun of or called names or have been picked on because of who I am and what I believe. This is why I feel upset when I see people acting horribly and picking on others too.

**5. I have two organisations that I run with the help of a great many wonderful people.** One helps **REFUGEE** families who have been forced to flee their country and are trying to survive in France and now the UK too. And the other organisation champions the rights of women and girls to live their lives free from all forms of hurt and injustice. But while **WOMEN'S RIGHTS** and **REFUGEE RIGHTS** are two of my biggest passions, I also care deeply about climate change and preserving wildlife and woodlands; about **FOOD BANKS** and breakfast clubs, and all the amazing people helping to keep people who are homeless alive; and, of course, ending all forms of **RACISM**. So as well as my own little charities, I love to support the work of other campaigners and activists too — especially as I believe:

## Everything is connected.

Just like all the electric wires that lie behind the walls of a house, and which work together to keep that house running and filled with light, all the world's issues are linked together too. For example, the climate change crisis is directly wired up to the refugee crisis because floods, tsunamis, earthquakes and droughts lead to people needing to flee their homes and lands.





And the refugee crisis has lots of wires linking it up to war, poverty, racism and political bullying, which then each feed into issues such as food poverty, homelessness, and women and children needing extra-special help. Everything is connected, even in ways we can't see. So helping to fix or strengthen any part of the house can help impact all the other parts too.

Lots of people find one single issue or one part of the house they dedicate their lives to fixing. Others find lots of causes and lots of bits of the house they care about. Maybe even at different times of their lives. The magical thing is, there is no 'right' cause or 'one' way to help. They're all important, all linked and all deserving. The decision about what matters most and when, and which part of the house we want to focus on, is up to us. No one can ever decide that for us. So I hope this book will enable you to hone in on your passion — or passions — and help you understand the freedom of choice you have. You can't fix everything alone. None of us can — there are way too many wires to deal with on our own. But if you put your time and energy and love into the one thing or the few things you *reeeeeally* care about, changes can be made, and they will start to fizz and trickle like electricity to help strengthen the house we're all trying to fix.



**6. I worry a lot.** In fact, some nights I find it difficult to get to sleep because of all the worries buzzing around in my head. But then I remember that no matter what it is I am trying to do or fix, I am never alone. Because the fact is, I get to work with some incredible, wonderful people who give me hope every single day. From those working in food banks and refugee camps to the teachers and volunteers doing everything they can to help the children and people they meet, there is a world of people who have turned their worries into actions and inspired me too. Alone, each of their actions might seem small. But

## 1+1+1 x infinity

means they are all making endless changes — some without even knowing it. Remembering this fact helps me put my worries — and me — to sleep. And I can't wait to share some stories about these incredible, wonderful people with you so they can help you put your worries to bed too.

**7. My happy place is . . . my imaginary chocolate factory!**

Preferably one with a huge library where I could sit and read a million books, whilst sipping hot chocolate (of course!). But until I can make this imaginary happy place become a reality, my real-life happy places are: my favourite bookshops, any place I can sit and build something out of LEGO, any seaside in any part of the world and . . . my bed — with an awesome book to hand! Mmmmmmm . . . cosy and delicious!





So that's me in a nutshell. And now that we know each other a little better, I am so excited to get started!

In each of the following chapters, I will introduce you to one of my ten secrets for creating change and making the world a better, kinder place for us all to be in. And the reason I'm sharing these secrets with YOU is because I know you are super-duper-brain-bustlingly clever, and I reckon you are already bubbling with awesome ideas to make things better for people around the globe.

In fact, before we jump into the first chapter, I just want you to know that no matter what you take, or don't take, from this book (don't forget, it's your choice completely), I hope it will help you to remember just One Thing.

(Actually, that's a lie: I'd love for you to remember lots of things. But this is, like, The *Main* Thing . . .)

I hope it will help you understand, without a single atom of doubt, just how magnificent and deeply unique you are. How there is NOBODY on this entire planet like you (not even if you're part of a twin or triplet or even sextuplet and everyone makes you dress the same!). How YOUR voice and YOUR actions can never ever

be copied by anyone else because whatever you decide to do is unique to you alone.

And I *really* hope it will help you remember that behind your face and eyes, and within your mind and heart and DNA forged over time and space, you possess a superpower that can elevate your every action and shift worlds you cannot see for the absolute better — should you decide to use it.

That superpower is, of course,
**kindness.**

TWO SYLLABLES.

ONE WORD.

ALWAYS UNDERESTIMATED.



But kindness is always capable of creating huge, earth-shifting changes. And whoah! When that superpower is released into the world along with your unique ways of showing it . . .

SPLASH! BOOM! CRACK!

SHUDDER!

The earth's plates (and knives and forks) will shift and alter and move for ever.

I know this because every single day I see people unleashing their own unique powers of kindness to change other people's lives for ever. It's why I know for a fact that there is always hope on the horizon, and that because of hearts exactly like yours, my hopes for a better, kinder world will never fade.

SO LET'S GET GOING THEN. WE HAVEN'T GOT ALL DAY.

Not when your own unique superhuman superpower is waiting to be unleashed . . .

# The Five Golden Rules

WAIT!

STOP!

Hold your horses (or cats or dogs or hamsters — whatever is in easiest reach)!

Before you dive hands-first into the very serious business of understanding why something which seems as small as kindness can play such a huge part in your world-changing actions, just a few rules.

Don't worry, they're not rules like 'Sit up straight and don't scratch (or pick!) you nose please'.

They're Golden Rules: which means they're not as boring as ordinary rules that aren't even given a colour (poor things — imagine being so boring nobody could be bothered to assign you a colour).

Think of these rules as the shiny foil wrapper that's wrapped around your favourite chocolate bar. It keeps what is inside fresh and crispy, and you only come across it for an instant before pushing it to the side to get to the actual chocolate (I may be on a secret mission to see how many times I can say the word 'chocolate' in this book. Get counting . . .)




So here are Five Golden Rules I need you to remember as you read:

(Feel free to wear sunglasses for them because, yup, they're just that shiny and important . . .)



## 1. YOU'RE UNIQUELY YOU, AND I'M UNIQUELY ME

So actions and lessons that may have worked for me might not work for you, or may seem out of your current comfort zone or experience. That's OK. In fact, go ahead and shout 'THAT'S NOT GOING TO WORK FOR ME' at this book whenever you feel like it, and write your own solutions or put in your own experiences instead. Just be sure to let anyone nearby know you may, on occasion, be shouting at a book, and that the book told you to. Just so they don't think you're being strange.

## 2. THERE IS NO 'ONE WAY'

Well, there are one-way streets that people drive down (those save lives, so please do follow them at all times).

What I mean here is that there is never just one way of taking action or one way of being and doing and believing something. Every single one of the billions of people on this planet are wondrously unique (see Golden Rule 1). Which means every single one of us will have ideas and reactions and visions for helping our world, which may be different. All are equally important and deserving of respect and being listened to. This book is limited because it can only provide you with stories and ideas that are based on my own personal experiences,



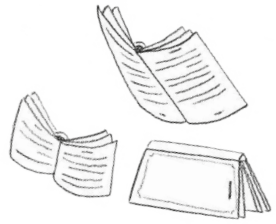
understanding and skills. And I'm limited because I'm just one person amongst billions. Put simply, my way is just one way of doing things; it's not the *only* way. So please take anything useful from my experiences to forge your own beautiful way ahead, and feel free to tweak things so they work for you. Think of it as me holding out a bunch of colouring pencils I've made for you to use as you want: you get to pick and choose the ones you need and leave the others behind. Easy.

## 3. STORIES EVERYWHERE . . .

Throughout this book, I'm going to be referring to characters from fictional stories that I absolutely adored at school (and which I still do because they were all *awesome*), who each taught me a great deal.

I wanted to include these stories and introduce you to some of the characters within them because they were my very first launch pads to the thoughts, ideas and questions I had about the world around me. And it's thanks to those thoughts, ideas and questions that I went on my own missions to find answers and people who might help me understand things better.

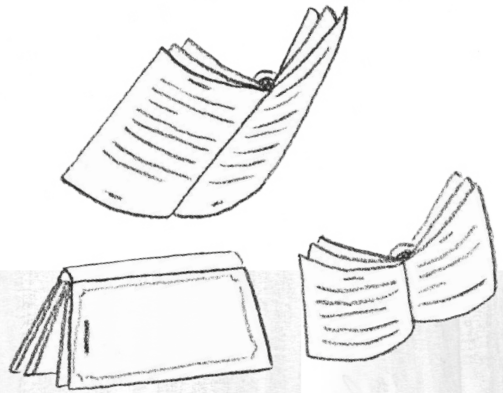
In fact, without those books and stories, I wouldn't be the person I am, and I would definitely not have become the writer or activist I am. Just like Tintin or Frodo Baggins or Meg Murry or all the children in *The Chronicles of Narnia* books, I wanted to explore the world and find out what I could do to be a part of it and make it better. That's the incredible, eternal power of books and stories — you never quite know where the imaginings and questions they inspire will lead you.



If you haven't read the stories or watched any of the TV programmes I refer to or have no idea who the character(s) I talk about are, first of all, don't worry: I'm not going to be giving any of the story away. And secondly, as far as I can see, you have three options. You can:

**(a)** *Drop this book like a hot piece of coal* and hit the library/head to your local bookshop/ask a trusted adult to help find one of my favourite programmes on the TV or online/ask your teacher to see if they have a copy of the book I speak of, so you can devour it right away!

**(b)** *Shake your head at me, shrug* and just keep on reading anyway.





**(c)** *Cheat a little* and ask your parents, carers, teachers or librarians to summarise the books or stories in under thirty seconds (so much fun) . . .

Your choice entirely.

## 4. GO DEEP-BOOK DIVING, AND COLLECT A STAR OR TWO

Grab that swimming costume, put on your head gear and dive into as much or as little of this book as you want, whenever you feel like it. As this is a non-fiction book, there is absolutely no order you have to follow — so if you want to skip between chapters, you can (yesssss!). Think of it as a strange kind of textbook — only much more fun (as proven by the existence of actual illustrations). Whatever makes you happiest and makes you want to go book diving the longest is great by me. After all, one book dive a day keeps the doctor away (as if *only* apples could do that. Pah! Bet a supermarket manager came up with that lie)!

And regardless of how short or long a time you want to go diving into these pages, remember to look out for some Star Actions on the way. These are actions that you and I can do oh-so easily and every single day to help make ourselves and the people around us — and our planet too — a little happier.

I wish I had real, actual, giant gold star stickers that I could reach out and give you every time you pledged to do one — followed by another, even more giant sticker every time you made your pledge a reality. But then you would probably be *covered* in stickers by the time you got to the last Star Action, and you'd make all the starfish confused. So maybe it's a good thing I can't do that (yet!).

## 5. THINK OUTSIDE THIS BOOK BOX

At the end of each chapter, I'm going to highlight a real-life person whose courageous acts and great kindnesses impacted history and the world as we know it. Some of them you may have heard of, others you may not have. Either way, I encourage you to not only go and learn all about them, but to explore lots more stories about other people just like them. So ask questions. Hit the library. Become a private detective (PD). In short, please jump beyond what this small rectangular box-shaped book contains and go on your own missions to find lots more amazing stories that lie beyond these pages.

So, now you know the rules, you are free to head to whatever part of the book you like (no more surprise rules from here, I promise). Even if it's just to stare at Isobel Lundie's awesome drawings (drawings are drawn to be stared at, so that's a sub-golden-rule: please do stare at ALL of them for as long as your eyes allow).

# READY?
# OK THEN . . .
# FOLLOW ME . . .