

# The People of Sparks

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*Random House Children's Publishers UK*

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# About the Book

Sequel to *The City of Ember*

*'We came down the river from the Pipeworks and found the way to another place. It is green here and very big. Light comes from the sky.'*

Lina and Doon have led the people of Ember out of the darkness of their underground city into a bright new world full of colour and life. They are accepted by the people of Sparks, one of the small, scattered communities living in the post-Disaster world.

But life on the surface has a dark side too. As time passes, the villagers of Sparks become more reluctant to share their precious resources with the pale strangers. Before long the differences between the two groups grow into resentment, hatred and violence, threatening to destroy the people of Ember's chance of survival. Somehow Doon and Lina must find a way to overcome the distrust and bring the people of Ember and Sparks together.

# THE PEOPLE OF SPARKS

Jeanne DuPrau

**RHCP DIGITAL**

*'Darkness cannot drive out darkness;  
only light can do that.  
Hate cannot drive out hate;  
only love can do that.  
Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies  
violence, and toughness multiplies toughness  
in a descending spiral of destruction.'*

*MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR,  
'STRENGTH TO LOVE', 1963*

## THE MESSAGE

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*Dear People of Ember,*

*We came down the river from the Pipeworks and found the way to another place. It is green here and very big. Light comes from the sky. You must follow the instructions in this message and come on the river. Bring food with you. Come as quickly as you can.*

*Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow*

## PART 1

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### *Arrival*



## CHAPTER 1

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### *What Torren Saw*

TORREN WAS OUT at the edge of the cabbage field that day, the day the people came. He was supposed to be fetching a couple of cabbages for Dr Hester to use in the soup that night, but, as usual, he didn't see why he shouldn't have some fun while he was at it. So he climbed up the wind tower, which he wasn't supposed to do because, they said, he might fall or get his head sliced off by the big blades going round and round.

The wind tower was four-sided, made of boards nailed one above the next like the rungs of a ladder. Torren climbed the back side of it, the side that faced the hills and not the village, so that the little group of workers hoeing the cabbage rows wouldn't see him. At the top, he turned round and sat on the flat place behind the blades, which turned slowly in the idle summer breeze. He had brought a pocketful of small stones up with him, planning on some target practice: he liked to try to hit the chickens that rummaged around between the rows of cabbages. He thought it might be fun to bounce a few pebbles off the hats of the workers, too. But before he had even taken the stones from his pocket, he caught sight of something that made him stop and stare.

Out beyond the cabbage field was another field, where young tomato and sweetcorn and pumpkin plants were growing, and beyond that the land sloped up into a grassy

hillside dotted, at this time of year, with yellow mustard flowers. Torren saw something strange at the top of the hill. Something dark.

There were bits of darkness at first – for a second he thought maybe it was a deer, or several deer, black ones instead of the usual light brown, but the shape was wrong for deer, and the way these things moved was wrong, too. He realized very soon that he was seeing people, a few people at first and then more and more of them. They came up from the other side of the hill and gathered at the top and stood there, a long line of them against the sky, like a row of black teeth. There must have been a hundred, Torren thought, or more than a hundred.

In all his life, Torren had never seen more than three or four people at a time arrive at the village from elsewhere. Almost always, the people who came were roamers, passing through with a truckload of stuff from the old towns to sell. This massing of people on the hilltop terrified him. For a moment he couldn't move. Then his heart started up a furious pounding, and he scrambled down off the wind tower so fast that he scraped his hands on the rough boards.

'Someone's coming!' he shouted as he passed the workers. They looked up, startled. Torren ran at full speed towards the low cluster of brown buildings at the far end of the field. He turned up a dirt lane, his feet raising swirls of dust, and dashed through the gate in the wall and across the courtyard and in through the open door, all the time yelling, 'Someone's coming! Up on the hill! Auntie Hester! Someone's coming!'

He found his aunt in the kitchen, and he grabbed her by the waist of her trousers and cried, 'Come and see! There's people on the hill!' His voice was so shrill and urgent and loud that his aunt dropped the spoon into the pot of soup she'd been stirring and hurried after him. By the time they

got outside, others from the village were leaving their houses, too, and looking towards the hillside.

The people were coming down. Over the crest of the hill they came and kept coming, dozens of them, more and more, like a mudslide.

The people of the village crowded into the streets. 'Get Mary Waters!' someone called. 'Where's Ben and Wilmer? Find them, tell them to get out here!'

Torren was less frightened now that he was surrounded by the townspeople. 'I saw them first,' he said to Hattie Carranza, who happened to be hurrying along next to him. 'I was the one who told the news.'

'Is that right?' said Hattie.

'We won't let them do anything bad to us,' said Torren. 'If they do, we'll do something worse to them. Won't we?'

But she just glanced down at him with a vague frown and didn't answer.

The three village leaders - Mary Waters, Ben Barlow and Wilmer Dent - had joined the crowd by now and were leading the way across the cabbage field. Torren kept close behind them. The strangers were getting nearer, and he wanted to hear what they would say. He could see that they were terrible-looking people. Their clothes were all wrong - coats and sweaters, though the weather was warm, and not nice coats and sweaters but raggedy ones, patched, unravelling, faded and grimy. They carried bundles, all of them: sacks made of what looked like tablecloths or blankets gathered up and tied with string around the neck. They moved clumsily and slowly. Some of them tripped on the uneven ground and had to be helped up by others.

In the centre of the field, where the smell of new cabbages and fresh earth and chicken manure was strong, those at the front of the crowd of strangers met the village leaders. Mary Waters stepped to the front, and the villagers crowded up behind her. Torren, being small, wriggled between people until he had a good view. He stared at the

ragged people. Where were their leaders? Facing Mary were a girl and a boy who looked only a little older than he was himself. Next to them was a bald man, and next to him a sharp-eyed woman holding a small child. Maybe she was the leader.

But when Mary stepped forward and said, 'Who are you?' it was the boy who answered. He spoke in a clear, loud voice that surprised Torren, who had expected a pitiful voice from someone so bedraggled. 'We come from the city of Ember,' the boy said. 'We left there because our city was dying. We need help.'

Mary, Ben and Wilmer exchanged glances. Mary frowned. 'The city of Ember? Where's that? We've never heard of it.'

The boy gestured back the way they had come, to the east. 'That way,' he said. 'It's under the ground.'

The frowns deepened. 'Tell us the truth,' said Ben, 'not childish nonsense.'

This time the girl spoke up. She had long, snarled hair with bits of grass caught in it. 'It isn't a lie,' she said. 'Really. Our city was underground. We didn't know it until we came out.'

Ben snorted impatiently, folding his arms across his chest. 'Who is in charge here?' He looked at the bald man. 'Is it you?'

The bald man shook his head and gestured towards the boy and the girl. 'They're as in charge as anyone,' he said. 'The mayor of our city is no longer with us. These young people are speaking the truth. We have come out of a city built underground.'

The people around him all nodded and murmured, 'Yes' and 'It's true.'

'My name is Doon Harrow,' said the boy. 'And this is Lina Mayfleet. We found the way out of Ember.'

He thinks he's pretty great, thought Torren, hearing a note of pride in the boy's voice. He didn't look so great. His

hair was shaggy, and he was wearing an old jacket that was coming apart at the seams and grimy at the cuffs. But his eyes shone out confidently from under his dark eyebrows.

‘We’re hungry,’ the boy said. ‘And thirsty. Will you help us?’

Mary, Ben, and Wilmer stood silent for a moment. Then Mary took Ben and Wilmer by the arms and led them aside a few steps. They whispered to each other, glanced up at the great swarm of strangers, frowned, whispered some more. While he waited to hear what they’d say, Torren studied the people who said they came from underground.

It might be true. They did in fact look as if they had crawled up out of a hole. Most of them were scrawny and pale, like the sprouts you see when you lift up a board that’s been lying on the ground, feeble things that have tried to grow in the dark. They huddled together looking frightened. They looked exhausted, too. Many of them had sat down on the ground now, and some had their heads in the laps of others.

The three village leaders turned again to the crowd of strangers. ‘How many of you are there?’ Mary Waters asked.

‘About four hundred,’ said the boy,

Doon. Mary’s dark eyebrows jumped upwards.

Four hundred! In Torren’s whole village, there were only 322. He swept his gaze out over this vast horde. They filled half the cabbage field and were still coming over the hill, like a swarm of ants.

The girl with the ratty hair stepped forward and raised a hand, as if she were in school. ‘Excuse me, Madam Mayor,’ she said.

Torren snickered. Madam Mayor! Nobody called Mary Waters Madam Mayor. They just called her Mary.

‘Madam Mayor,’ said the girl, ‘my little sister is very sick.’ She pointed to the baby being held by the sharp-eyed woman. It did look sick. Its eyes were half closed, and its

mouth hung open. 'Some others of us are sick, too,' the girl went on, 'or hurt – Lotty Hoover tripped and hurt her ankle, and Nammy Proggs is exhausted from walking so far. She's nearly eighty years old. Is there a doctor in your town? Is there a place where sick people can lie down and be taken care of?'

Mary turned to Ben and Wilmer again, and they spoke to each other in low voices. Torren could catch only a few words of what they said. 'Too many . . .' '. . . but human kindness . . .' '. . . maybe take a *few* in . . .' Ben rubbed his beard and scowled. Wilmer kept glancing at the sick baby. After a few minutes, they nodded to each other. Mary said, 'All right. Hoist me up.'

Ben and Wilmer bent down and grasped Mary's legs. With a grunt they lifted her so that she was high enough to see out over the crowd. She raised both her arms and cried, in a voice that came from the depths of her deep chest, 'People from Ember! Welcome! We will do what we can to help you. Please follow us!' Ben and Wilmer set her down, and the three of them turned and walked out of the cabbage field and towards the road that entered the village. Led by the boy and the girl, the crowd of shabby people followed.

Torren dashed ahead, ran down the lane and got up onto the low wall that bordered his house. From there, he watched the people from underground go by. They were strangely silent. Why weren't they jabbering to each other? But they seemed too tired to speak, or too stupid. They stared at everything, wide-eyed and drop-jawed – as if they had never seen a house before, or a tree, or a chicken. In fact, the chickens seemed to frighten them – they shrank back when they saw them, making startled sounds. It took a long time for the whole raggedy crowd to pass Torren's house, and when the last people had gone by, he jumped down off the wall and followed them. They were being led, he knew, to the town centre, down by the river, where there

would be water for them to drink. After that, what would happen? What would they eat? Where would they sleep? Not in my room, he thought.

## CHAPTER 2

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### *Out from Below*

THE PEOPLE FROM the dying city of Ember had come up into the new world only a few days before. The first to arrive had been Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow, bringing Lina's little sister, Poppy, with them. From a ledge high up in the great cave that held their city, they'd thrown down a message, hoping someone would find it and lead the others out. Then they'd waited. At first they'd explored the wonders around them. But as the hours passed, they began to worry that their message had not been found and that they would be alone in this world for ever.

Then, in the late afternoon of the next day, Doon suddenly shouted, 'Look! They're coming!'

Lina grabbed Poppy by the hand. All three of them ran towards the mouth of the cave. Who was it? Who was it coming from home? A woman emerged from the darkness first, and then two men, and then three children, all of them squinting against the bright light.

'Hello, hello!' Lina called, leaping up the hill. She saw who it was when she got closer: the family who ran the Callay Street vegetable market. She didn't know any of them well - she couldn't even remember their names - and yet she was so glad to see them that tears sprang to her eyes. She flung her arms around each one in turn, crying, 'Here you are! Look, isn't it wonderful? Oh, I'm so glad you're here! And are more coming?' The new arrivals were



too breathless and amazed to answer, but it didn't matter, because Lina could see for herself.

They came out from the cave, shading their eyes with their hands. They came in bunches, a few of them and then minutes later a few more, stumbling out into a light a thousand times brighter than any they'd ever seen. They stared in astonishment, walked a few steps, and then just stood, dropping the sacks and bundles they carried, gazing, blinking. To Lina and Doon, who felt already that they belonged here, the refugees from Ember looked strange in this bright landscape of green grass and blue sky. They were so drab and dingy in their heavy, mud-coloured clothes, their coats and sweaters in colours like stone and dust and murky water. It was as if they had brought some of Ember's darkness with them.

Doon suddenly leaped away, shouting, 'Father! Father!' He threw himself against his stunned father, who fell backwards, sat down on the ground and burst into a combination of laughter and weeping to see his son again. 'You *are* here,' he gasped. 'I wasn't sure . . . I didn't know . . .'

All afternoon they came. Lizzie Bisco came, and others from the old High Class, along with Clary Laine from the greenhouses, and the doctor who had helped Lina's granny, and Sadge Merrall, who had tried to go out into the Unknown Regions. Mrs Murdo came, walking in her brisk, businesslike way, but giving a cry of joy when she saw Lina hurtling towards her. People came whose faces Lina recognized but whose names she didn't remember, like the shoe repair man from Liverie Street, and the little puffy-faced woman who lived in Selverton Square, and the tall, black-haired boy with blue-grey eyes so light they looked like glints of metal. What was that tall boy's name? She spent a second trying to recall it, but only a second. It didn't matter. These were her people, the people of Ember. All of them were tired and all of them were thirsty. Lina

showed them the little stream, and they splashed the water on their faces and filled their bottles there.

‘What about the mayor?’ Lina asked Mrs Murdo, but she just shook her head. ‘He’s not with us,’ she said.

Some of the older people looked terrified to be in such a huge place, a place that seemed to go on without borders in all directions. After they had stared nervously about them for a while, they sat down in the grass, hunched over, and put their heads to their knees. But the children ran around in ecstasy, touching everything, smelling the air, splashing their feet in the stream.

By evening, 417 people had arrived – Doon kept track. As the light began to fade from the sky, they shared the food they had brought, and then, using their coats as blankets and their bundles as pillows, they lay down on the warm, rough ground and slept.

The next morning they got ready to leave. Lina and Doon, when they first arrived, had spotted a narrow grey line that ran along the ground like a pencil stroke in the distance. They thought it might be a road. So the people of Ember, having no other clue about where to go, picked up their bundles and set out in that direction, a long, straggling line trailing across the hills.

It was on this walk that Mrs Murdo told Lina and Doon about leaving Ember. The three of them walked together, Mrs Murdo with Poppy in her arms. Doon’s father walked behind them, leaning forward now and then to hear what Mrs Murdo was saying.

‘I was the one who found your message,’ Mrs Murdo said. ‘It fell right at my feet. It was the day after the Singing. I was on my way home from the market, feeling sick with worry because you and Poppy had disappeared. Then there was your message.’ She paused and looked up at the sky. She was keeping a couple of tears from falling, Lina saw.

Mrs Murdo composed herself and went on. 'I thought it would be best to tell the mayor first. I wasn't sure I trusted him, but he was the one who could most easily organize the leaving. I showed him your message, and then I waited to hear the city clock ringing out the signal for a meeting.'

Mrs Murdo paused to catch her breath. They were going uphill, over rough clumps of earth – hard walking for city people, whose feet were accustomed to pavement.

'And was there a meeting?' Lina asked.

'No,' said Mrs Murdo. She plucked some burs off her skirt and shifted Poppy to her other shoulder. 'Mercy,' she said. 'It's terribly hot.' She stood still for a moment, breathing hard.

'So there was no meeting?' Lina prompted.

Mrs Murdo started walking again. 'Nothing happened at all,' she said. 'The clock didn't chime. The guards didn't come out and start organizing people. Nothing. But the lights kept flickering on and off. It seemed to me there was no time to lose.

'So I went to the Pipeworks and showed your message to Lister Munk. We followed the directions, and we found the rock marked with E right away – because people were there already.'

'But how could they be, if they didn't have the directions?' Doon said. 'Who was it?'

'It was the mayor,' said Mrs Murdo grimly, 'and four of his guards. Looper was there, too, that boy who used to keep company with your friend Lizzie. They had huge, bulging sacks with them, piled up on the edge of the river, and they were loading the sacks into boats. The mayor was shouting at them to work faster.

'Lister yelled, "What are you doing?" but we didn't need an answer. I could see what they were doing. They were going first. The mayor was making sure that he would get out, along with his friends and his loot, before anyone else.'

Mrs Murdo stopped talking. She trudged along, wiping sweat from her forehead. She frowned up at the hot, bright sky. Poppy whimpered.

‘Let me carry the child for a while, Mrs Murdo,’ said Doon’s father.

‘Thank you,’ Mrs Murdo said. She stopped and passed the squirming Poppy to Doon’s father, and they walked on.

Lina waited a minute or so, and then she couldn’t wait any longer. ‘Well, what happened?’ she said.

‘It was awful,’ Mrs Murdo said. ‘Everything happened at once. Two of the guards looked up at us and lost their balance and fell into the water. They grabbed hold of the loaded boats, which made the boats tip and dump their load into the river. The other guards and Looper knelt down and tried to reach them, but they were pulled in, too. In the midst of all this, the mayor jumped onto the one boat that was still upright, but as soon as he hit it, it turned over and he plunged into the river.’ Mrs Murdo shuddered. ‘He screamed, children. It was a horrible sound. He bobbed in the water like a giant cork, and then he went under. In just a few seconds, he and his guards were swept away. They were gone.’

They walked in silence for a while, going downhill now. After a few minutes Mrs Murdo went on.

‘So Lister and I went back up into the city, and we had the Timekeeper ring the bell for a public meeting. We tried to explain what to do, but as soon as people heard the first bit – that a way out of Ember had been found, and that it was in the Pipeworks – everyone began shouting and rushing around. Things turned into a terrible mess. People were in too much of a hurry even to ask questions. Hundreds of them poured through the streets of the city all at once, and outside the door of the Pipeworks a huge crowd pushed and shoved to get in, so many people, so panicky, that some were trampled and crushed.’

‘Oh!’ cried Lina. ‘How horrible!’ These were people she knew! It was too awful to think about.

‘Horrible indeed,’ said Mrs Murdo. She frowned out across the vast landscape surrounding them, where there were no people in sight at all. ‘It was impossible to control them,’ she went on. ‘They rushed to the stairway – some people lost their footing and fell all the way down the stairs. Others ran right over them. And then, when they realized that they were going to have to get into these little shells and float on the river, some people were so frightened that they turned round and tried to go up the stairs again, and some were so eager to get going that they jumped into the boats and capsized them and fell into the river and were drowned.’ She raised her eyes to Lina’s. ‘I saw everything that happened,’ she said. ‘I’ll never forget it.’

Lina looked behind her at the citizens of Ember toiling across the hills. These were the ones who had made it out. ‘How many do you think were . . . left behind?’ she asked Mrs Murdo.

Mrs Murdo just shook her head. ‘I don’t know,’ she said. ‘Too many.’

‘And have the lights gone out for ever now?’

‘I don’t know that either. But if they haven’t, they will soon.’

Hot as she was, Lina shuddered. She and Doon exchanged a look. They were thinking the same thing, she was sure: their city was lost in darkness now, and anyone left there was lost, too.

Later that day the refugees from Ember came to the road they had seen from afar. It was potholed and weed-cracked, but easier to walk on than the rough ground. It led alongside a creek that flowed swiftly over round, smooth rocks. In all directions, they saw nothing but endless expanses of grass. They shared the food they had brought

with them, but it wasn't much. Some of them soon grew weak with hunger. They grew faint from the heat, too, which was hard to bear for people used to the constant chill of Ember. Poppy cried when she was set down on her feet, and her face looked flushed and hot.

Night came in the strange, gradual way so different from the sudden lights-out that signalled night in Ember. The travellers lay down on the ground and slept. They walked the next day, too, and the day after that. By then the food they had brought with them was gone. They travelled more and more slowly, stopping often to rest. Poppy was listless; her eyes were dull.

Finally, around the middle of the following day, they trudged up still another hill, and from there they saw a sight that made many of them weep with relief. Farmed fields lay below them in a wide valley, and beyond the fields, where the stream they'd been following joined a river, was a cluster of low brown buildings. It was a place where people lived.

Like the others, Lina was glad to see it. But it wasn't a bit like the city she had imagined, the one she'd drawn pictures of back in Ember, the one she'd hoped to find in this new world. The buildings of that city had been tall and majestic and sparkling with light. That city must be somewhere else, she thought as she started down the hill. She'd find it - not today, but someday.

## CHAPTER 3

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### *Through the Village*

THE WOMAN WHO had greeted them led the people of Ember into the town. They went down a dusty street, past buildings that looked as if they'd been made out of the same brown earth that was underfoot. They were heavy-looking, imperfect buildings: their walls were fat and lumpy, rounded smooth at the corners. Lina saw cracks in the walls and crumbled places where bits of a window ledge or a step had fallen away.

Paths and alleys and strips of garden wound between the houses. It was clear that no one had planned this place, not the way the Builders had planned Ember. This town must have grown, one bit added to the next and another bit added to that. Plants grew everywhere. In Ember, the only plants were in the greenhouses – unless you counted mould and fungus, which grew on the rubbish heaps and sometimes in kitchens and bathrooms. Here, flowers and vegetables grew together beside every house. Plants sprang up alongside the streets, climbed walls, crawled over fences, pushed up through cracks in stairways, tumbled out of big pots and over windowsills and even down from roofs.

There were animals, too – huge, amazing, terrifying animals. In a fenced-in place at the edge of the town, Lina saw four brown animals much bigger than she was, with squarish heads and long, tasselled tails. Farther on,

tethered to a post in front of a house, was a yellow-eyed creature with two spikes poking out of its head. When she walked by, it suddenly said, 'Ma-a-a-a,' and she skittered away in fright.

She turned to look for Doon, who had fallen a little behind. She found him stooping over, peering at some yellow flowers growing next to a wall. 'Look at this,' he said when she came up beside him. He pointed to a flower's tube-shaped centre. 'There's a spider in there the exact same yellow as the flower.'

There was. Only Doon would notice such a thing. Tugging at the sleeve of his jacket, she said, 'Come on. Stay with us,' and she hurried him up towards the front of the line to join his father and Mrs Murdo and Poppy.

These four people – Poppy and Mrs Murdo, Doon and his father – were Lina's family now, and she wanted them close around her. Only Poppy was really related to her. But Mrs Murdo was like a mother; she had taken Lina and Poppy into her house when their granny died, and she would have kept them with her if they hadn't had to leave the city. Doon's father was part of her family just because he was Doon's father. And Doon himself – he was the one who'd been Lina's partner in finding the way out of Ember. There was a tie between the two of them that could never be broken.

On they walked, down one street and up another, around curves and down through narrow passages. Everywhere, people stared at them. Some leaned from open windows. Some sat up on roofs, their legs dangling over the side. Some stood still in the midst of work they'd been doing, their shovels or brooms in their hands. These people were taller and browner than the people of Ember. Were they friendly? Lina couldn't tell. A few children waved and giggled.

After a while, the refugees came out from the narrow streets into a wide-open area. This must be like Ember's



Harken Square, Lina thought, a place in the centre of town where people gather. It wasn't square, though. It was more like a rough half circle paved in dusty brown brick.

'What is this place called?' Lina asked Mary Waters, who was walking just ahead of her.

'The plaza,' Mary said.

*Plah-zuh*. Lina had never heard that word before. It was her first new-world word.

On one side of the plaza was the river. On the other side were stalls with thatched roofs and small buildings with display racks out in front holding faded-looking clothes, shoes with thick black soles, candles, brooms, pots of honey and jam, along with plenty of things that Lina didn't recognize.

A bigger building stood at the plaza's far end. It had wide steps in front, a double door and a tower with windows up high that looked out over the plaza. Next to it was a tremendous plant of some kind – a great pole, much higher than the building, with branches like graceful, down-sweeping arms and leaves like bristles.

'What is that?' Lina asked a woman who was standing at the edge of the plaza, watching them go by.

The woman looked startled. 'That's our town hall,' she said.

'No, I mean the big plant next to it.'

'Big plant? The pine tree?'

'Pinetree!' said Lina. 'I've never seen a pinetree.' Her second word: *pinetree*.

The woman gave her an odd look. Lina thanked her and walked on.

'Step this way, please,' said Mary, who was trying to keep the unruly refugees in order. 'There's plenty of water for you here – both in the river and in the fountain.' She pointed to the middle of the plaza, where there was a pool of water circled by a low wall. The water in the middle of

the pool jumped up into a column of bubble and spray that splashed back down and jumped up again constantly.

The people of Ember surged forwards. Dozens ran to the edge of the river and bent down to bathe their faces with water. Dozens more crowded around the pool. Children splashed their hands in it, crawled up on the rim, and tried to reach the leaping water in the middle. Some of the children jumped in and had to be hauled out by their parents. People at the rear of the crowd pushed forwards, but people at the front weren't ready to be pushed. Suddenly there was yelling and jostling and water sloshing out onto the pavement. Lina slipped and fell down, and someone tripped over her and fell, too.

'Please!' shouted Mary, her deep, loud voice rising above the uproar.

'Order! Order!' shouted a man's voice. Lina heard other voices, too, as she struggled to her feet, the voices of the villagers crowding in at the edges of the plaza.

'Get back, Tommy, get away from them!'

'Where did you say they came from? Under the *ground*?'

'Are they people like us, Mama?' a child said. 'Or some other kind?'

Of *course* we're like you, thought Lina. Aren't we? Are there more kinds of people than one? She got to her feet and wrung out the hem of her sweater, which was sopping wet. She spotted Mrs Murdo on the other side of the plaza and headed towards her.

The commotion finally subsided. The people of Ember, their thirst quenched, gazed about them in wonder. Everything was strange and fascinating to them. They stood with their heads craned back, gazing at the towering plants and the peeping creatures that flitted around in them; they stooped down to touch the bright flowers; they peered in doorways and windows. Children ran down the grassy bank to the river, tore off their shoes and socks, and