



KATHERINE RUNDELL

The Explorer

The Trap (Page 228)

He tipped up his boots, checking them for scorpions; all the books he'd read had been very urgent on the matter of scorpions.

Fred's fingers were clumsier than usual, his body was quivering with nerves.

The ruin looked different in the sunrise. It looked more alive. There were places where vines covered the half-fallen remnants of walls that along the far end of the square; places too where the vines had been hacked back, and he could see the marks on the stone where it had been cut from the parent rock.

Fred walked slowly through the open square, staring upwards. The canopy over them was intricately constructed, woven from the branches of the trees that had sprouted among the stones and nestled against the city walls, and from a network of vines. It was a green tablecloth for a giant, laid out atop the trees.

There were holes in the green scattered everywhere, where the sun burst through in bright light, and one vast gap, just above the statues, where the stones shone yellow. Directly under it, a single tree stood, burnt of all leaves. Perhaps by the sun, Fred thought, or a very small forest fire.