



Illustration by Sally Bebbington

## A letter to: World Leaders

Dear World Leaders,

Were you children once? Did you play with mud and climb trees? Did you have hopes and dreams for when you became adults? Did you think: I want to be a world leader? Or a ballerina? Or an astronaut?

What I'm really asking is, were you innocent and free-spirited like all children? I'm sure you were. And this is what surprises me. Most adults lose their innocence, but not entirely. Most of us still have a trace, or at least a memory, of that child, still living inside us. This is why we laugh at silly things. And do and say silly things. And wish we could still climb trees and be free.

Do you still have a memory of being a child? If you do, then why are you so cold hearted? (Did someone turn your heart to ice like in *The Snow Queen*?) Why do you bully others? And tell lies? Why do you knowingly create divisions and hatred between people? Why do you refuse to listen to others? Isn't that what adults aren't supposed to do?

I'm confused. And scared. I thought that as people grow older, they gain more insight and wisdom, so that they can guide and protect others. But everything seems to have been turned upside-down. The adults are the ones who don't know how to behave, whereas the children do. But because the adults hold all the power, they're free to ruin and wreck the world. Especially the adults who really *do* hold the power: You, the world leaders.

Why? Why are you doing this? Do you have a good reason? Any reason? A bad reason? I would love to hear it. Because not understanding something, is like living in darkness. So please, tell me the reason. Maybe if you tried to open your heart, it might warm up a little. Maybe all you need is a hug? To be reminded what it feels like to be a child. To be loved. To be allowed to cry, even if you don't know why. Just because you're human.

Are you human? I hope so. Although I see no evidence. No trace of emotion, even intelligence. Please tell me your secret. I'm all ears.

*Anonymous*