**Hunger Games**

His mother went back into the bakery, grumbling, but he must have been watching me as … the realisation that I’d have nothing to take home had finally sunk in…

There was a clatter in the bakery and I heard the woman screaming again and the sound of a blow, and I vaguely wondered what was going on. Feet sloshed toward me through the mud … It was the boy. In his arms, he carried two large loaves of bread that must have fallen into the fire because the crusts were scorched black … The boy never even glanced my way, but I was watching him. Because of the bread, because of the red weal that stood out on his cheekbone. What had she hit him with? My parents never hit us. I couldn’t even imagine it. The boy took one look back to the bakery as if checking that the coast was clear, then … he threw a loaf of bread in my direction. The second quickly followed, and he sloshed back to the bakery, closing the kitchen door tightly behind him…

It didn’t occur to me until the next morning that the boy might have burned the bread on purpose. Might have dropped the loaves into the flames, knowing it meant being punished, and then delivered them to me.