

"Seagull. Pigeon," Bear says, ignoring me and shining his torch right into the carcasses. "Crow."

A murder of crows. It was in our dictionary in this strange list right at the back of the book. Collective nouns. A sloth of bears, a misbelief of painters and a murder of crows. Like the dictionary was warning me.

"Don't, Bear. Don't look."

"Starling. Magpie."

"Bear, please. Stop it!" For once he's called out their names, we can't ever unknow. And we can't ever unsee.

"Why did they come here?" Bear asks, still trying to make sense of it all.

"They're town birds, or they were once. They don't know they're not allowed." My eyes are wet and hazy as I look again to the horizon, willing my eyes to make out the treeline. "Come on! Please! Let's carry on. We have to. We have to, Bear."

The moon's overhead — a full circle of white, hanging right above us, but still not providing enough light to see. We've got too used to artificial city light.

"Bear!" I scream and I pull him on, yanking at his arm to force his legs to move. "Let's get into the forest."

PART II

Wild

