



There's a shadow on the horizon. An uneven edge on the skyline. It's really close now.

I wish we were seeing the trees first in the daylight. It's impossible not to imagine danger when everything's so dark.

Behind us, we can hear shouts, or screams maybe, carried on the breeze. But there's no gunfire, no border alarm, just the fire siren, quieter now, but still wailing out incessantly.

We practically fall into the forest, out of breath. For a moment we pause on the threshold. Partly it's disbelief that we made it this far and partly it's fear. This is the start of the Wild, and despite everything – despite how we've longed for it, dreamed of it, sickened for it – we've been taught our entire lives in the city to be scared of it.

"We have to keep going, Bear," I say, though I'm still rooted to the spot.

"Why are you whispering?"