

"We could give the lynx a name," Bear says hopefully. "He could be our new pet."

"There you go again, Bear," I say, raising my eyebrows. "How do you know it's a boy?"

"It's a girl?"

"I don't know, I sort of think she is." I can't explain why. It's something to do with the way she watches us.

"Shall we call her Lady Jane Grey then? She's got that collar round her neck, like kings and queens did."

"Yeah, but that name's taken. Lady Jane Grey's with Etienne. What else?"

"I don't know. Goldie? Spot? Like the pet tags in the Emporium?"

"Nah, they're too obvious." And she's better than that. She'd never be a pet, with a shiny gold medallion round her neck.

"She's a bit like a shadow," Bear says, his nose crinkling up. "Cause she follows us."

"That's good."

"Or like a ghost of the forest."

"I like that. Ghost."

"Like the Sticks," Bear says, pleased with himself.

"That's it then. I name her Ghost, in honour of our left-behind stick insects." I put on this pompous voice and Bear repeats her name after me solemnly.

"Now come on," I say, "help me with the tarpaulin.

The lynx might have a name, but she's not exactly our friend yet. I think while we're sleeping we're safer under a layer of canvas."

"Maybe Ghost will keep the wolves away."

"Maybe. That would be good."

"Our watch cat."

I look out at her — eyes still awake, still watching. That would be nice. And if she could listen for drones too — meow or something if she heard one. Warn us.

The tarpaulin keeps out the moonlight, but it doesn't keep out the cold. Nor does the groundsheet stop the damp seeping upwards into our sleeping bags.

Although the forest looks dry, when you touch it, when you sink down into it, it's not dry at all. I don't know whether it's rainwater from days ago or the leaves themselves. All the water they've ever taken in leaking out as they break down to become part of the forest floor. Their journey back to the beginning.

"I'm starving, Ju," Bear pipes up, interrupting my thoughts.

"I know," I say, thinking of the trap outside. "I hope Ghost doesn't take tomorrow's lunch."

"Me too," Bear says sleepily. "I wonder what it'll be."

"For lunch?"

"Yeah."

"Some rabbit or squirrel probably. What would be best?"